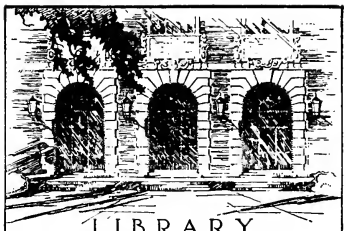


LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823
M882p
v.3

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2009 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

http://www.archive.org/details/premier03mudf

THE

PREMIER.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III.

LONDON:
HENRY COLBURN AND RICHARD BENTLEY,
NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
1831.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENTLEY,
Dorset Street, Fleet Street.

823
M882p
v.3

THE PREMIER.

CHAPTER I.

COLONEL ASPER had lost no time in doing what he said he should,—seek his friend Charles, and explain away the language he had used, under an erroneous impression of his conduct. He intended to do more—disclose, in confidence, the discoveries he had made, relieve his mind from all anxiety as to the fate of Caroline, and discuss, with perfect openness of heart, the best means to prosper his love for her, which he was still determined should no longer remain concealed, either from their respective families, or the world. He had gathered, partly from Louisa, partly from his

sister, the true grounds of Charles's motives in keeping his attachment secret; and he meditated, among other things, undertaking the office of a mediator, unknown to Charles himself, between him and Sir George, in whose estimation he knew he had the good fortune to rank with such weight, as would give effect to his intercessions.

But the state in which he found Charles, utterly forbade all thoughts of attempting the second part of his plan, while it was doubtful even whether it would be of any use to fulfil the first. Although it was not more than four o'clock when he called upon him, (and, of course, only about the middle of the forenoon, in the calendar of fashionable hours,) he was evidently inflamed by wine. Nor was it wine alone that had produced the excited temperament which his words and looks betrayed. Wine he had, in truth, taken, to stifle, by its treacherous aid, the varied torments which he endured: but he had added the more potent and pernicious stimulant of opium, in quantities sufficient to deaden his sensations, and surround his situation with the confused

and shadowy existence of a waking dream. His eye was dull; his countenance haggard; a languid, unmeaning smile diffused itself over his features.

The disclosure made by Mr. Pickthorne had, in fact, completed his misery. He saw he had irrecoverably lost one, whom he did not suspect himself of loving half so well, till he had to teach his love the hard lesson of resigning her. He saw, too, the breach between his father and himself widened beyond the power of man to close. It seemed as if the bond of nature which held them in the condition of son and father, had been snapped in twain; as if he had no longer a father—his father no longer a son; while all the hopes which had fed upon that hour of reconciliation, when he should be restored to the bosom of his family, the husband of his Caroline—the brother of her brother—the banished prodigal no more—but the reformed and repentant scion of an honest sire—died within him! The world was a blank to his heart. Yet, the living spring of filial devotion, which dissipation and youthful follies had never been able to turn from its true course, continued to

flow there; for even in this dark hour of his own sufferings, he longed by any means, if any there were, (and none were too desperate or irrational to be rejected, in the wild tumult of his feelings,) to save from dishonour a name which had hitherto proudly kept it at bay.

Charles was writing when Colonel Asper entered his room. He scarcely rose from his seat to receive him, acknowledging his presence by a slight movement of the head merely, without uttering a word. When the Colonel had taken a chair, Charles, with the pen still in his hand, as if he seemed to expect he should resume its use immediately, fixed his eyes upon him, with that unsteady heavy gaze, which the half torpid, half excited state of his nerves naturally produced. Colonel Asper inquired if he was ill. He made no other reply than by a smile that most intelligibly expressed both surprise and contempt — surprise, at a question he thought superfluous to one in his condition; contempt, for a solicitude he believed incompatible with the object of the visit.

The Colonel, as briefly as he could, and

avoiding every allusion to Sir George, stated the object of his visit; declared he was now satisfied of his mistake in supposing he had been privy to the elopement of his sister; expressed his regret for the error into which he had fallen; and desired to be understood as retracting every word uttered under that erroneous impression, which could be construed into matter of personal offence.

Charles listened to this explanation without evincing the slightest emotion of satisfaction. On the contrary, there was something like disappointment, mingled with mockery, in his looks; and when it was finished, all he said was — "Is the purport of your visit accomplished?"

"Yes," answered the Colonel, "if you tell me I have succeeded in removing every unpleasant feeling from your mind."

"When you sought me as my accuser, Colonel Asper," said Charles, in slow and listless accents, "you gave me reasons. I would fain know those which have brought you now to make atonement."

"The knowledge that I was wrong."

"It has been so promptly obtained," observed Charles, "that I presume it has been attended with the further knowledge of learning you are *now* right."

"I do not exactly comprehend you," replied the Colonel.

"It is plain, I think," said Charles sarcastically, "you cannot know I was *not* the criminal, but by having *discovered* the criminal."

"Perhaps so."

"Certainly so," interrupted Charles impetuously, "or you have a game to play whose movements I do not see."

"Even as it pleases you, my friend," replied the Colonel with an air of indifference.

"There are rumours abroad touching this business, Colonel Asper, which may have reached you. Is it so?"

"Be satisfied for the present," replied the Colonel, "with what I have said."

"Why, I ought to be satisfied," he answered, forcing a wild laugh, "to enjoy the fruits of gallantry without incurring its dangers. But I am not,—and I will not be, till I know over whose devoted head the storm is gathering. I

am too conscientious, you see, to trade under false colours, or put in the plea of an *alibi*, when I can only escape from justice myself, by permitting injustice to fall upon the innocent."

The Colonel was at a loss to understand the drift of what he heard; but Charles soon made him comprehend it, though he was still, for a time, unable to penetrate his ulterior purpose. At length this, too, unfolded itself, and he was lost in astonishment. Utter madness, he thought, could hardly have inspired so wild, so useless an expedient, for turning aside from guilt the hand of punishment, had guilt existed where its existence was assumed. The feeling was noble, heroic; but it had so wholly engrossed his mind, as to exclude the simplest exercise of its reasoning powers, or he must instantly have detected its extravagant fallacy.

For, what could be more fallacious, as to any practical good, than an attempt to represent himself as the seducer of Caroline, and amenable to her brother, in the way of what is called honourable satisfaction? Say, he succeeded in his design—that he persuaded the Colonel he *was* the criminal party — and that the usual

consequence followed, a bloodless, or a fatal duel—the imposture could not have screened his father for eight-and-forty hours. Yet, shallow, nay childish almost, as the device was, it had taken such hold of his imagination, that he sought to compass it by every possible contrivance. At first, he confined himself to insinuations; but when he saw they were ineffectual, he broadly asserted the fact, endeavouring to vanquish the assumed incredulity of the Colonel, (who, in the beginning of this extraordinary scene, rather humoured than crossed him,) by the most stinging insults, under the feigned guise of self-congratulations at having met with a friend so convenient and accommodating.

There was something horribly grand, notwithstanding, in this act of self-devotion—this moral immolation of honour and truth—this surrender of life itself, perhaps, to save a father's life and honour. The hysterical laugh, the cold-blooded taunt, the coarse ribaldry, the reckless exultation, the profligate boasting, which Charles successively employed, to goad the brother of the

woman he loved, into the spirit of vengeance with which he was eager to cope, was a fine but melancholy picture of filial virtue clothing itself in shame, to achieve its sacrifice. If we can conceive a heartless libertine, triumphing in the secure enjoyment of his spoils, and that very triumph founded upon the supposed pandarism of the natural protector of his victim, we shall have an accurate idea of the character voluntarily assumed by Charles.

The Colonel, from the moment he clearly discerned his motives for assuming this character, assumed, in his turn, a character to meet it. He affected to yield, by degrees, to the belief which Charles wished to create; revoked the recantation he had made; threw into his looks and words a suitable portion of scorn and anger; and finally declared his resolution, if the assertions were persisted in, to call him to a strict account.

"But," said he, "what reliance can I place upon the spoken words of a man who shifts from black to white, according as he may fancy his ends best served by the one or the other?

Subscribe, with your name, a paper I will draw up, and, with that in my possession, you shall find, I know how to act upon it."

"Write!" replied Charles, placing before him the materials for so doing—"write!—if nothing less will serve you for a monitor."

The Colonel drew to the table and wrote. When he had finished, he handed it to Charles, who read it over in silence, affixed his name, and returned it to the Colonel.

"Remember!" said he, "*that* is a bond which fetters your tongue and arm, till it is satisfied to the letter. The one speaks not, the other is uplifted not, against any man but myself."

"I shall not violate its implied conditions," replied the Colonel, folding up the paper, and putting it into his pocket; "and, be assured, you shall soon hear from me in the way you wish."

The Colonel took his leave.

"So!" exclaimed Charles, when he was alone —in the low voice of smothered anguish— "I am a recorded liar, by my own confession, and shall arrive at the distinction of a bold-

faced villain in his report! Foh! My spirits flag. Wine! I dare not think;—wine is the subtle thief that robs us of our thoughts, with a smiling face, and a hand more gently sweet than Love's own fingers. Wine! wine!"

A goblet of claret sparkled before him. He tossed it off! Another! And then he sat down to resume the writing he was about when interrupted by the entrance of Colonel Asper. A tear fell upon it as he traced the last words. He covered his face with his hands, and wept like a child!

CHAPTER II.

THE reader is requested to give his attention to a short episodical chapter upon a very interesting subject, handled in a perfectly original manner. If, however, he dislike episodes, and have no taste for originality, he has only to go at once to page 23.

I have always felt greatly surprised at the objections which prevail to the practice of duelling. I do not mean among persons who find it necessary to send or accept challenges, because it is natural *they* should be keenly aware of the moral and physical inconveniences of the practice; but among persons who probably never touched a loaded pistol in their lives, and certainly never stood opposite to one, or intend doing so, at any distance which would

permit of distinguishing the individual holding it. These persons are commonly men who reason with great accuracy upon all ordinary matters; that is, they are what are called sensible men—which means, they are as wise as their neighbours;—an idiomatic phrase used to denote everybody who thinks as he ought to do upon things in general. And, I must say, it is surprising, that these persons (forming, as they do, nine-tenths, if not more, of society at large, including both sexes,) should entertain such strange, misshapen, and unphilosophical opinions.

It would require a treatise, instead of a parenthetical chapter, to discuss these opinions with all the gravity, amplitude, and acumen necessary to overturn them in a complete and masterly manner. I shall therefore confine myself, on the present occasion, to stating a few of the more striking and incontrovertible advantages which result, as I conceive, from this unjustly abused and unreasonably proscribed pastime.

In the first place, all rogues, bullies, coxcombs, dandies, and puppies of every gradation,

who are, for the most part, arrant cowards, are kept in some sort of check by the salutary dread of a bullet; while, if they surmount that dread, it is an even chance that society is benefited by the actual introduction of an ounce or so of lead into some of their vital parts. In the one case, we have a positive good; in the other, the comfort of looking forward to a probable one.

But are there no indirect, no incidental benefits, as it were, connected with duelling? Assuredly there are, and many of them of such a nature as require only the most superficial knowledge of political economy and the theory of moral sentiments to understand.

The gun-maker, the gunpowder manufacturer, the bullet-caster, are all, in degree, the better for it: nay, the tailor even comes in for his share of the common good; for if the duellist escape with his life, it is ten to one but he spoils his nether garment. Nor is this the whole of the artificial stimulus which is thus given to trade. A duel may have fatal results; and then think of the long line of relations,—mothers, fathers, wife, children, brothers, sis-

ters, down to uncles, aunts, and cousins, perhaps, that must go into mourning on the melancholy occasion. Think, too, of the undertaker, the parson, the grave-digger, the sexton, and the bell-ringer; while, if the man is not cleanly hit off, there are a doctor's fees and surgeons' bills to be added.

The surgeon and the physician, however, are more interested when there happens to be only a "solution of continuity," without an actual perforation of, or a lodgment in, any of the nobler parts. But any one who has read Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations, and remembers what he says about the thirty-six separate and distinct processes through which a common pin passes, before it arrives at that state of perfection in which four-and-twenty of them are sold for a halfpenny, will have no difficulty in comprehending all the collateral branches of social industry which are quickened into greater activity by the same event which influences, more immediately, the commercial dealings of the manufacturers of funereal stuffs, and gives direct employment to the undertaker, the parson, the grave-digger, the sexton, the bell-

ringer, the physician, the surgeon, and the apothecary. Now, he who does all this good, or is instrumental in its being done, must be a benefactor to society—and such a benefactor, I contend, the duellist is, who either takes a sure aim, or receives the benefit of one.

I might say a great deal upon the subject of those social and domestic feelings, which are the grace and ornament of private life, and which duelling has a powerful tendency to call into action; but I have promised this should be a short chapter, and therefore I can only briefly advert to them. Take any of the following cases, and observe how intimately they connect themselves with the exercise of all the more amiable and endearing qualities of our nature.

Is the duellist, who falls in the field of honour, a married man? It is not impossible, that that which is the end of his own troubles, may be the end of his wife's too; either by sending her to *her* grave, or giving her the opportunity of following him to *his*. In the former case, she looks forward, with fond delight, to being reunited with him in a state of perfect

blessedness; in the latter, she looks back with tender gratitude to the occurrence which restored her to a state of "single blessedness." But suppose neither of these consequences to take place; suppose the widow is neither affectionate enough to die of grief, nor has reason to live rejoicing; why then, she is just in that pathetic middle predicament, which enables her to grieve at her leisure, to make her grief last at least as long as her mourning, and to cherish the memory of her first lord, till it melts away in ecstasy in the arms of a second. What a train of sympathies, what scope for all the best affections of our nature! Inconsolable grief, and a *broken* heart—unexpected relief, and a *joyful* one—moderate sorrow, and its gradual transformation into the expectant felicity of a bride—all emanating from the one little circumstance, of going out to fight a duel, and not coming back again!

Is the duellist a father as well as a husband? One of two consequences probably follows; perhaps both. His children mourn for him, as children should; and then, many of the filial virtues which had lain dormant during his life

are displayed; (for it frequently happens, that the love and affection we ought to feel, we never do feel, till they are of no use to their object;) while, if there be an heir among the mourners, he has the opportunity of showing his disinterested affliction, by convincing the world he would rather his father were living, than himself in possession of the estate. On the other hand, should the whole of the family take after the surviving parent, and shed no tears upon his grave, or, at most, reserve the only tears they can muster for his funeral, what is there to complain of? They are released, by his death, from the daily necessity of practising the most odious of vices,—hypocrisy.

It would be easy to pursue this inquiry through all the relations, civil, moral, and domestic, in which a man can stand, and to show that, in all of them, he brings out the virtues peculiar to the situation of those he leaves behind, by inflicting upon them the calamity of his loss. But the cases are so obvious, and must so naturally present themselves to the imagination of the reader, that it would be tedious to insist upon them.

I am aware it will be urged, that we have no more right to walk into the next world merely to please ourselves, than we have to sport over a manor without permission; and the argument has a very plausible appearance. But it is as easily overthrown, as all the others which have been so triumphantly answered. Put the case another way—and here I shall borrow the reasoning of the Sieur POUCQVILLE, a learned doctor of the Sorbonne, who published an eloquent little tract, about the beginning of the seventeenth century, entitled, "*How came I here? Or the right of every man to depart when he is tired of staying.*" The Sieur POUCQVILLE was a divine, a profound theologian, and his writings are frequently mentioned by Bossuet, Massillon, and even the Archbishop of Cambrai, (Fenelon,) as masterpieces of logical acumen.

"Suppose," says POUCQVILLE, (p. 11.) "I am placed, without my consent, without being even consulted on the subject, or in fact knowing any thing about it, in the middle of a beautiful garden. Will any one pretend to say, that because I *am* there, I can't tell how, I am bound to *stay* there, I can't tell why, and have

no right to get out if I can, or if I have a wish to do so? I have heard a great deal, and I have read a great deal, about the implied contract between man and his Maker." (Here follow the names of several of the most distinguished schoolmen of France, Spain, Germany, Italy, and England, with references to those of their works which treat upon this subject; after which, the Sieur POUCQVILLE thus continues:) "These be great names; but, could I summon their once living owners from their tombs into my presence, and were I to ask them how they became so well acquainted with the conditions of that contract they speak of, verily I believe they would be dumb-founded. In general, when any bold sceptic ventures to doubt the existence of certain duties, he is referred, as he should be, to the Scriptures, as the hallowed organ through which the Divine will has been revealed to us, concerning them; but that authority, I humbly presume to think, avails us nothing here. There is, indeed, a positive prohibition against taking away the life of another, but where shall we find it said, that we may not die? And truly, I have always thought

that this prohibition was pronounced, precisely because no man ought to be sent out of the world—no, not for any crime whatsoever, save that of murder—till he finds it convenient to go. If it were not so, methinks that supernal power, whose prescient faculty foresaw all that was to be, would not have omitted to tell us, that the hour of our departure, like the hour of our coming, was placed utterly beyond our control, and that to dispute his law upon this point would be a heinous crime."

I cannot accompany the learned author any further, or I shall infringe upon the promise with which I set out; but what between myself and the Sieur POUCQVILLE, I am clearly of opinion this much agitated question is set at rest for ever; so that henceforth, men will be permitted to kill each other in affairs of honour without reproach. A soldier, who hires himself to be shot at for a shilling a day, is accounted a brave fellow, and a useful member of society; but if two gentlemen are set upon scattering the little brains they may happen to have, in what my friend Cosmo Blakeway, President of *the Muses*, calls "an interview between two

fools," (*i. e.* a duel) either a horrible outcry is raised afterwards, or the myrmidons of police are employed, beforehand, to prevent them. This is oppression; and I say with the philosophical grave-digger in Hamlet, "the more the pity that great folks should not have countenance in this world to drown, hang, (or be shot) as well as their even Christian."

CHAPTER III.

"WELL, Morgan — what are you standing there for? You have mixed me my glass of Madeira punch, and filled my hookah—and—I don't want any thing else, do I?"

"I thought you might want the chess-table put out *this evening*, Sir," replied Morgan.

"Yes, Morgan, we *shall* want the chess-table," said Caroline, who was sitting close by the General's side, with his hand fast locked in both hers.

So Morgan placed the chess-table, and then retired, with a something fluttering at his heart, which told it was the seat of better feelings than can always be looked for even under the white waistcoat of an unliveried menial.

This dialogue took place between the Gene-

ral, his daughter, and honest Morgan, about two hours after the General had been "taken by surprise," in the way related at the end of our second volume. How the interval had been passed, we have too much regard for the nerves of the reader to describe. Suffice it, there was a scene of weeping, which it would have been impossible for any but the performers themselves to witness with becoming fortitude. Nor was it until the General had shed all the tears he had been collecting, from the day of Caroline's flight, not one of which had been able to squeeze through the barriers of pride and passion before this moment, that he found the more substantial relief of swearing a little, storming a little, and getting a little out of temper. But it was a mere summer tempest; troubling the sky, for a brief space, with dark clouds, blustering winds, a flash or two of lightning, hardly audible thunder, and a copious shower of rain; to be succeeded by a serene, sunny evening, with the cheerful promise of fine weather next day.

"After all, girl," said he, at the end of a very wholesome lecture upon the sin of diso-

bedience, "I don't think anybody has been ill used but myself; and though I mean to forgive *you*, some time or other, I *never will* forgive that marble-faced philosopher, upon whom my indignation produced no more effect this morning, than if I had been talking to the stone lion on the top of Northumberland House. And as to Mr. Spencer—I cannot say, as things have turned out, that I think I should very much have blamed you for what you have done, if you had done it in any other way —mind you—because he has shown, by abandoning the siege after the first repulse, that he was hardly worthy to command the garrison, had it surrendered at discretion. But I suppose he has given his reasons for it here," continued the General as he gave Caroline the letter Mr. Spencer had enclosed, on the morning of his departure for the Continent, in one to himself.

Caroline did not then break the seal; neither did she make any reply to what had fallen from her father. It was a subject upon which she could not *talk*, either as it related to herself or Mr. Spencer. There were yet too many

vivid and painful recollections: too much to engross the feelings; too many hopes and fears still gathering round it, to permit of its becoming a theme for conversation. She was not, in fact, mistress of her thoughts, sufficiently to make them independent of the deep emotions from which they sprung. A look, a kiss, a tear, a sigh, a gentle pressure of the hand,—these were almost the only answers she could give, according as they were called forth by the varying tenor of her father's words; and in this way, the conversation between them had been carried on, after the Colonel left them to themselves.

With the exception of a new shilling or half-crown, which is known to have the property of burning holes in the pockets, when those fractional denominations of the pound sterling are received from great-grandmothers or great-aunts, there is nothing, perhaps, that produces a sensation in the pocket so thoroughly uncomfortable, as an unopened letter, which we long to read, no matter whether our longing be accompanied with fears or hopes. It was natural, therefore, that Caroline should seize or make the earliest opportunity she could, to read Mr.

Spencer's letter; and when she had done so, her mind was not only lighter, but her feelings towards Mr. Spencer himself became a shade or two less repulsive than they had been for the last four or five weeks.

Well!—There they are, seated at the chess-table; and they are both of them playing the game in a way which would have horribly disturbed the nervous systems of Phillidor or Stamma. Caroline thinks she is trying to lose, to please her father; the General thinks he is trying to win; while the truth is, neither of them is thinking about the game at all, but merely pushing knights, bishops, and pawns about, without knowing or caring why they make a single move. The General, however, keeps puffing away at his hookah, and sipping at his Madeira punch, most indefatigably. Now and then, his eyes are fixed upon Caroline, (while hers are fixed upon the board,) and from their glistening appearance, it is evident all the lachrymose moisture was not drained off in his late attack; and Caroline, as often as his hand rests upon the table, lays hers gently on it; her smooth, delicate white fingers

looking like the tendrils of the wild honeysuckle twining round the dark, rough stem of the black-thorn. They might be taken for a pair of lovers, pretending to play at chess for the sake of being near each other; and any reader, male or female, who has ever done the same thing, or made similar contrivances, to be separated from the rest of the family or company, in a room, in order that they may whisper sweet words unobserved, exchange soul-fraught glances, or thrill beneath a touch of the hand merely, will know, that under such circumstances, chess, above all other games, must be most shamefully used.

However, let them go on; and while they are striving for check-mate,—the General, at least, who has just had his attention quickened by losing one of his castles, which has made him look red in the face, in spite of the gentle condition of his feelings, — we will crave the reader's attention to three letters, with the contents of which it is necessary he should be acquainted.

The first is the valedictory epistle of Mr. Spencer, sealed, as it may be remembered, with

black wax, bearing the impression of a torch reversed. It ran thus:

"WHEN these lines reach the hands of Miss Asper, she will have the gratification of knowing, if the grateful intelligence shall not have reached her before, that she is for ever released from the importunities of one, whose misfortune it has been to 'teach her to *abhor* him.'

"By what means he became unconsciously a preceptor, in a lesson so fatal to his own happiness, neither his heart nor his reason can explain. He has looked into the former; but he finds there only an ardent, and, he fears, imperishable attachment; he calls upon the latter, and is answered by it, that his conduct has been uniformly animated by the desire (however it may have failed in the act,) to consult the wishes, promote the felicity, and do homage to the virtues, of the amiable and interesting object of his attachment.

"These were his offences. Could he suppose they were of a nature to make him '*abhorred?*' Could he suppose that Miss Asper, who more than once declared his character had inspired

her with almost every sentiment which it could have been his ambition to awaken, *except love*, would exchange those sentiments for the one single and absorbing feeling of '*abhorrence*,' because he was but too proud and happy in being permitted, as he flattered himself he was, to repay them by his *own* fervent, pure, and disinterested love?"

A less ungentle sentence was surely deserved by such devotion. A less marked and cruel rejection might surely, too, have been employed, than one which gave to common rumour, and public scoff, the galling tale of a bridegroom spurned by his mistress, even at the church doors! One firm, decisive word —one positive declaration of a will that was incapable of change, would have done, indeed, what the course complained of has equally done,—sent him, a self-banished fugitive, from his country, in search of such happiness as mere diversity of scene can give; but it would not have added to the misery of blighted hopes, the rankling mortification produced by the consciousness of unmerited obloquy.

"Thus much, and no more! The hated

name of an '*abhorred*' person has been studiously withheld in this parting remonstrance, that it might not offend the eyes of Miss Asper; and the writer of it believes he is giving expression to no transitory feeling—to no mere excitement of the moment, when he declares that the only change of scene which will have power to efface her image from his heart, must be the change that awaits us all — the change from life to death!"

The second letter was that on which Charles's tears dropped fast and sorrowfully, as he wrote its concluding sentence. These were its contents—wild and disordered as his own feelings:—

"I HAVE deeply offended you! The stain of many follies is upon my name. I am cut off from your affections—blotted from your heart—and live, in your memory, only as a recollection of a thing once possessed—once valued, but now lost for ever!

"I saw a father yesterday—Oh, God! I think I never before saw the human face so divinely lighted up! And it was all because

he had just heard honourable tidings of an only son! I thought I could have been content to resign half — ay, all my time yet to live, to have been that son, and to have known that *you* were the proud and happy father! This *was* my feeling; and methinks a feeling like this could never find its way to a nature that had lost all its relish of noble qualities.

"There have been moments — desponding ones,—when, in the inmost recesses of my spirit, whither I have seemed to retire, I have striven to perform the office of an impartial judge between us. I have laid bare every transgression which an accusing conscience could summon to its tribunal. I have counted up my offences; tried them by the sharpest, sternest test of what might be almost called a fastidious morality; and, in the face of Heaven, I protest I could not fix the taint of dishonour or of crime on one of them. And then, my father, (forgive the confession!) I have cited *you* before the same tribunal—I have put *you* on your defence —I have called upon *you*, to tell your son *why* he is banished from your presence:—and there has come a voice from the depth of my heart, which

has seemed to say, ' Wherefore visit the worst levities of headlong youth with the punishment, to which no addition could be made for the worst vices of confirmed and mature profligacy?'

" 'Miserable sophistry!' you will exclaim, when you read this —' What sentence of banishment have I pronounced? When did the command pass my lips—*Avoid me?*' You never did, my father, banish me by words; but cold looks, haughty silence, an impatience of my presence, —these spoke for you, and pride resentfully obeyed, when humbler feelings should have sued. That pride is dead within me now: those feelings would lead me to your feet. I could gladly become a very child in my perfect obedience to your will, and call those only my happiest days which were passed in the unclouded sunshine of your approbation.

" But —

" What is it I am about to say? Gracious God! has this been permitted for vengeance? Is it retribution? Who, then, is the guilty one that has provoked it? I?—Or—What a horrible blank is that to fill up!

"He who has the longest journey of misery to make, is he who must most wish to shorten it. *I* am that traveller. To breathe, merely, is not life, when every hope of life is fled. A blighted tree only encumbers the earth it can no longer adorn or benefit. Away with it!—ay, away with it!

"When you hear of my fate, which will be in the same moment you read what I now write, to the world it must appear that you condemn me, or my sacrifice fails in its design; but, in your heart, my memory will be hallowed; and you will confess you had a son capable, in the hour of trial, of exemplifying the noble precepts of exalted self-devotion which, in his boyhood, he had so often heard from your lips. Be this my epitaph! I shall sleep proudly beneath it."

The third letter was one which Colonel Asper despatched to Charles on the morning after his interview with him.

"SIR—All the preliminaries that usually attend a communication like the present, have been superseded by circumstances which I need not

dwell upon. We understand each other too well to require the interference of friends.

It is enough, therefore, that I apprize you of my determination to claim the satisfaction contemplated by yourself, when you, yesterday, made me the depositary of a secret, dishonourable to you and insulting to me. If you persist in that statement, you are, of course, prepared for its consequences; and the sooner these consequences are brought to an issue, the better.

Let it then be this evening, at nine o'clock: the hour is somewhat unusual; but, for my own part, I have always thought moonlight, or candle-light, or any light, serves as well for such matters as daylight.

"At the hour I have named, I shall be in the first field on the left hand, immediately after you pass the second bridge on the Paddington Canal. There, if you come attended by a friend, this business may be settled without interruption. I am, Sir,

"Your obedient Servant,

"Charles Ardent, Esq." "H. ASPER."

And now, the reader is duly informed of every thing necessary to enable him to understand what will be related in the ensuing chapter.

"But the General, and Caroline?"

Oh, they have both had their first sleep by this time. They played till they had only got a king and a pawn a-piece, and finding they could neither of them get on to queen, they gave it up and went to bed; the General laying all the fault upon the Madeira punch, which prevented him from seeing his adversary's knight behind the black bishop. The consequence was, he lost his king's pawn, just as it was within two moves of being made a queen; a disaster which nothing but the amiable state of his feelings could have prevented from becoming the guilty parent of an exclamation it would have cost us a pang to record.

CHAPTER IV.

CHARLES had risen, after a night of feverish dreams, of which coffins, scaffolds, headsmen, funerals, in short, death's accessaries in every shape, had formed the grisly texture, and was gloomily revolving in his mind the too probable events of the day that had dawned upon him, when he received the Colonel's letter. With what a ghastly smile he welcomed its contents! How full of fearful energy was the expression of his countenance, as he dwelt, for one moment, upon the image which presented itself to his mind!

"Attended by a friend!" he muttered to himself, as he slowly folded the letter up again, and put it into his pocket. "This is no office for a friend; but I know a man, whose services are at my command."

He went forth to seek him—found him—and secured, as he expected, his services at a word.

This man was Lieutenant O'Brien; a native, as his name denotes, of that beautiful country where (unless they live in populous towns or cities) people say their prayers at night with a vow at the end of them, (like pious mariners in a storm) that they will perform some good work next day, if it be God's providence they should be neither roasted alive, nor have their throats cut, before morning.

Denis O'Brien, who first sniffed the scent of gunpowder when he was about fourteen, (he was now hard upon four fourteens in this troublesome world) had seen service in almost every quarter of the globe. Certain it is, he had distributed sundry parts of his body in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America; leaving an eye in one place, two fingers in another, the calf of his right leg (sliced off by an enemy's sabre) in a third, and, to crown the whole, one of his arms at the battle of Salamanca. As to duels, though he considered himself the most peaceable man in the whole army, he had more of them upon his hands in one year, than fall

to the share of any notoriously quarrelsome fellow in his whole life. But going out to exchange shots at a *friendly* distance, (as he always called that where he could shake hands with his antagonist,) was to him the same thing as washing his face before breakfast. He had scars in every part of his body; and those which were conveniently seated for the purpose, he used to show, in support of his argument, that there was nothing to fear from a pistol shot. The proof was somewhat Hibernian in its quality; but when Denis talked of there being nothing to fear, he only meant that a man's body *might* be riddled through and through, and the man himself none the worse for it.

One little incident in the early life of Denis O'Brien will show the pugnacious propensities of his peaceable character, in a very striking light.

When he was quartered with his regiment in Ireland, he happened, by some hitherto unexplained mischance, to appear in a court of justice, to answer the complaints of an unreasonable husband, who was tormented with

the same suspicions as sharpened Iago's revenge against the noble Moor. The counsel employed to paint the enormity of Denis's crime, and the agonized sufferings of the injured plaintiff, indulged in those poetical licences of speech, so agreeable to a forensic orator, but so disagreeable to the individual who is the object of them. "I owe you one!"—"I owe you two!!"—"I owe you three!!!"—"By the powers! I'll owe you a dozen!!!!" Thus did Denis keep ejaculating, while he listened to an account of himself by no means flattering, and the less tolerable, because, in many respects, not true. The issue of the trial was, he had to pay a small fine, and to undergo a twelvemonth's imprisonment.

In the interim, the gentleman who had unconsciously made himself a creditor to Denis, exchanged the bar for the camp, the pen for the sword, the wig for the plumed helmet, and the gown for the sash and gorget; in other words, he was no longer Counsellor, but Captain, Kennedy, of the —— militia. The moment Denis had satisfied the sentence of the court, and walked abroad again, a *free* man, he resolved to pay his debts like an *honest* man.

He hunted out the quondam counsellor, and got such a scent of him, that he tracked him to the theatre in Dublin, where he saw him sitting in the stage-box, with a party of ladies and gentlemen. Denis obtained admission into the same box; took advantage of a moment when there was a profound silence in the house, caused by the intense interest of the scene on the stage, and leaning over those who were before him, tapped his late legal friend on the shoulder. As he turned round, Denis exclaimed, in a voice loud enough to be heard by the whole theatre:—

"Captain Kennedy!—You are a liar and a scoundrel!"

He then walked quietly out of the box. In an instant he was followed by Captain Kennedy and his friends into the lobby, where the former demanded immediate satisfaction, at the same time drawing his sword.

"No, Sir!" said Denis, thrusting the hilt of his own sword out of the way, to avoid temptation—"No, Sir! I have lain under the imputation of the slanders you heaped upon *me* in a court of justice, for twelve months. You shall

remain as long under the public affront *you* have just received—then we shall be upon equal terms; and at the end of the time, you shall find me as ready to give satisfaction for a premeditated insult, as I am to resent a cowardly one."

So saying, he turned upon his heel. Captain Kennedy stormed, reviled, blustered; but Denis walked away, satisfied with this, which he called the first dividend of his debt, and left the Captain to the consolation of his friends.

The affair was much talked of at the time; but, like all the great affairs of this life, was forgotten at the end of a month. The regiment of Denis was quartered in the North of Ireland; that of Captain Kennedy in the South; and nobody thought of them or their quarrel except Denis himself; for it had ceased to occupy the thoughts of even the Captain. But Denis was as punctual as a lover to his appointment. The very day after the twelvemonth had expired, he arrived in the town where Kennedy's regiment was on duty, sent him a polite message, and proposed a meeting the following morning at sunrise.

The proposal was accepted, when it was found impossible, by the Captain's friends, to accommodate the matter. They met. Captain Kennedy was wounded, and, as it was at first feared, mortally. Denis, therefore, kept out of the way to wait the result. By skilful treatment, however, and great care, the Captain recovered; and he was surprised one morning, while yet an invalid, by a visit from Denis.

"I am delighted, Captain Kennedy," said he, "to find you so well! We shall be able now to settle the rest of our business."

"The rest!" exclaimed the Captain—"Why, what the devil do you want more?"

"My dear fellow!" replied Denis, "it would be mighty ridiculous to let it stop here. Every body is talking about it; and, depend upon it, the public won't be satisfied with what has passed."

"Damn the public!" said Captain Kennedy, "what have they to do with it, if we are satisfied? and I promise you—"

"Stop, my dear fellow!—*I* am not satisfied. You have had a shot at *me*, you know, for what I said in the theatre,—I *must* have one at *you*

for what you said in court. Yes, by the powers! I shall be laughed at else; for, you see, *I* have had no satisfaction at all, as I am sure you will confess."

The upshot of the matter was, that Captain Kennedy (who was brave enough, though he might not be quite convinced by the logic of Denis,) gave a second meeting. They fought with swords instead of pistols; and when Denis felt the point of the Captain's through the fleshy part of his left arm, he acknowledged, and not till then, that *he* had received satisfaction!

Such was the man, selected by Charles, to be his friend in an affair where a real friend must have proved troublesome; for it never entered into Denis's head to enquire into the merits of meetings of this kind, or to begin by considering whether they could be honourably dispensed with. You *want* to fight — or you *are* to fight — or you *must* fight — or fight it out at all events, whether you want or not, or must or not,— comprised the whole extent of the concern he gave himself.

When they arrived on the ground, the moon was shining brightly; but the evening was gust-

and chill, and lowering clouds drifted across the sky, denoting tempestuous weather. Still, there was a serene and calm aspect all around, which contrasted forcibly with the stern purpose and troubled feelings of Charles. He gazed at the moon, and thought, as was natural to one in his situation, that in a few moments, perhaps, its cold pale beams would fall upon a bleeding corse—himself that corse!

They were the first, it seemed. No other persons were in sight. Charles, who knew the deception he had practised upon the Colonel, began to suspect, that possibly, his designs were penetrated, and that he had in his turn been played upon.

"They have five minutes to spare," said O'Brien, looking at his watch—"I shall not give them a moment's grace."

"Yes, yes," replied Charles eagerly—"watches may differ—let them have the benefit of such a contingency: we will wait till ten minutes after nine."

"Not ten seconds, nor the tenth part of a single second," exclaimed Denis, still holding his watch in his hand—"I love punctuality in

every thing. Better late than never, say some; but better never than late, say I."

"You will not forget what we have agreed upon?" said Charles.

"The devil a bit—it is too much to my own taste, my dear fellow; and especially as I see it is getting cloudy."

"Nor the commission which I have entrusted to you," he continued, "if—"

"Wisht!" said O'Brien—"I see them. They have hit the time beautifully. We can soon have the business over now."

Charles looked, and saw two persons approaching. He walked a few paces in an opposite direction, not wishing to incur the risk of any personal communication with Colonel Asper; while O'Brien went forward to meet them. They were both wrapped in large military cloaks.

"Have I the honour of addressing Colonel Asper?" said O'Brien, taking off his hat to the one which he had settled, in his own mind, must be the Colonel.

"No—" replied the stranger, returning the

salutation,—"Captain Sydney, the friend of Colonel Asper."

"Just as it should be, Captain," said Denis. "It is you and I, that must first have a little conversation. I have the honour to be Mr. Ardent's friend in this affair — Lieutenant O'Brien, of the —— regiment. Shall we walk aside, a few minutes?"

The two seconds withdrew to a distant part of the field. Colonel Asper remained muffled up in his cloak. Charles was slowly pacing up and down, about thirty or forty yards off, without once directing his looks towards him.

"Is it impossible," said Captain Sydney, "to prevent this matter from going to extremities?"

"Faith, I can't say any thing about the possibility or impossibility," replied Denis, "for I never attempted, in my life, either as second or principal, to spoil these things by meddling. Depend upon it, Captain Sydney, when two gentlemen have gone the length of *thinking*, only, about giving or receiving satisfaction, there is no complete cure for the ill

blood, but having it. But when they are once upon the ground!—By the powers! I know one thing—that man's courage has not come with him, who would not then prefer being carried off, to walking away again without pulling a trigger."

"Then," said Captain Sydney, "we must proceed. You are aware, I presume, of the cause of quarrel between Mr. Ardent and Colonel Asper?"

"No more than I know what my grandfather was thinking of before he died—and it concerns me as little. I suppose there *is* a quarrel; and I guess Colonel Asper is in the wrong."

"How so?"

"Because Mr. Ardent does not intend to make it a sham squib-and-cracker affair. He insists upon eight paces."

"That is a murderous distance!" said Captain Sydney.

"It is the only distance for a short-sighted man," replied O'Brien. "I know *I* could not see to hit my own father at a greater."

"Have you brought the pistols?" inquired Captain Sydney.

"As pretty a pair as you ever handled," answered Denis, drawing a case from his pocket. "Whenever I am engaged in a matter of this sort, I always come provided myself, without inquiring what the other party may do; and then, I know, there can be no disappointment."

"It is a murderous distance!" repeated Captain Sydney.

"I can't allow that word to be used again," said O'Brien, somewhat warmly. "It has *always* been *my* distance, as a principal; and often, before now, where I have been a second; —and Captain Sydney must permit me to say, I have never been concerned in any thing to which that epithet can be applied."

"Well, Sir," replied Captain Sydney coolly, "I assent, on the part of my friend Colonel Asper, but on one condition only."

"Name it."

"A condition," continued the Captain, "which I make in the true character of this

sanguinary business. It is this — I propose, that if either of the principals fall, his friend shall take his place; and should *his* fire take effect, that, then, the two seconds shall exchange shots, till one or both ——"

"Are you serious, Captain Sydney?" interrupted O'Brien, laughing.

"Quite. I cannot reconcile it to *my* notions of honour, to expose a friend to any danger, in which I am not ready to participate myself."

"But where is the offence, or injury, to call for this danger?"

"Oh!" replied Captain Sydney sarcastically, "we will make us as good a cause for blood, as can be found in nine cases out of ten, where it is shed. Any thing will do. I'll say, the moon shines—you shall shrug your shoulders,—and I'll pick a quarrel out of that, as legitimately as if you had dashed the lie direct in my teeth."

"You are a man after my own heart!" exclaimed Denis, rubbing his hands with great glee—"It shall be done! One down and the other come on! By the powers! I hope the moon will just be pleased to shine out a little,

though, when it comes to my turn; for I 'm as blind as a beetle, almost, even in the sun; and I always like to be able to catch a glimpse of the ball in my adversary's pistol. I shall have the greatest possible pleasure in obliging you, Captain Sydney; though I assure you it is a little inconvenient, for I expect my wife and daughter to-morrow morning by the Holyhead mail, and they don't know in the world where to find me in London, unless I am there to meet them—"

"Which you *can* be," interrupted Captain Sydney, "if it should be your fortune—"

"Faith, you are right in that now, and it never struck me. But if it goes *t'other* way, you will perhaps take the trouble to call at the Bull-and-Mouth yourself, and inquire for Mrs. O'Brien, and just mention what has happened; but don't forget to tell her I lodge at number twelve, Panton-street, Haymarket, where she will find every thing very comfortable, and breakfast ordered. However, I hope it will not be necessary for me to give you this trouble."

"Just so," said Captain Sydney, smiling at

UNIVERSITY OF
ILLINOIS LIBRARY

his commission, and the characteristic civility implied in the concluding hope of the Lieutenant.

Here the conversation terminated, after settling that the signal should be given by Captain Sydney. When O'Brien rejoined Charles, he eagerly inquired whether the proposed distance had been acceded to. O'Brien told him it had, but said nothing of the conditions which were tacked to it; he told him, also, he was to take the signal from Colonel Asper's friend, which would be the dropping of a white handkerchief. Soon after, they took their ground; and as Charles received his pistol from the hands of O'Brien, he said with a calm, firm voice, "Remember how you are to act!"

There was a pause; a profound stillness. Captain Sydney and O'Brien had silently withdrawn to the spot where the signal was to be given. The two friends stood within eight paces of each other. Colonel Asper had persisted in keeping on his military cloak, which was closely folded about his person, leaving only his right-arm disengaged; though O'Brien endeavoured, through Captain Sydney, to persuade him to throw it off, pointing out the in-

creased danger that might otherwise attend a wound. His tall, muscular figure rose darkly against the subdued light which the moon shed through the thick clouds that were rapidly gathering over her, and contrasted with the comparatively slender and youthful form of Charles, whose eyes appeared fixed upon the ground, instead of being directed towards where Captain Sydney stood.

The pause still continued. It was unusually prolonged. O'Brien reminded Captain Sydney, in a whisper, that every thing was ready; when, instead of giving the signal, he walked slowly and deliberately up to Charles, stood directly opposite to him, so as to be between him and Colonel Asper, and then, as he dropped the handkerchief, threw open his cloak, and exclaimed—

"Rash fool! Draw back your foot from the precipice to whose brink you have so madly approached!"

"My God! my father!"

The pistol fell from his unclenched hand, and he stood motionless, gazing on his father, whose voice he knew, and whose features he now recognised!

CHAPTER V.

THE words had scarcely passed his lips, when Charles found his hand grasped by the Colonel; while O'Brien, who had joined the party, and was stooping down to pick up the pistol, was inwardly calling St. Patrick to witness this was the first time he had ever been made a fool of.

"My father!" repeated Charles. "My father! and here!—What does it all mean?"

"That you are not the first man whom the generous impulse of a noble heart has misled," replied the Colonel, shaking him cordially by the hand.

"But *you*, Sir," said Charles, addressing his father, who was standing silently by his side. "What have I to hope, or fear, from *your* presence?"

"The evening is chill," replied Sir George, wrapping his cloak round him, "and we had better leave this place. As we walk home," he continued, putting his arm through that of Charles—"as we walk home, you shall learn more."

"Home!" responded Charles, in a tone which told how that word from his father's lips penetrated his soul. "Shall I then go from here to the home which you left to come hither?"

"Charles! Charles!" exclaimed his father with deep emotion, "we have been divided long enough. I have not done you justice, Charles—I looked upon the surface merely—and because a few rank weeds grew idly there, I did not believe the soil beneath could be rich in concealed treasures—forgive me!"

"For God's sake! do not go on thus, unless you would break my heart," cried Charles, bursting into tears, and throwing himself on the bosom of his father.

"Oh, by the powers! there is no standing this," said O'Brien, in a voice whose utterance was so choaked, that the words were literally blubbered out—"it's as deep as any tragedy—

Colonel Asper, we don't do things in this way in my country, I 'll be d——d if we do!" and the Lieutenant cried as lustily as ever he had done in the best days of his childhood.

"No more, my son, now!" said Sir George, recovering his composure. "Let us go home. Your mother and sister are anxiously expecting us."

The mind of Charles was too busy with its unexpected felicity, too much overpowered by it, to find time for remembering its griefs; or, rather, in the then joyous state of his feelings he had *no* griefs; for a secret consciousness dwelt upon his thoughts, which shaped them to his hopes, and he was persuaded that an event which had so auspiciously restored a father, would (though he knew not how) give him his Caroline again. He longed to question her brother; but forbore, believing that every question would be answered by anticipation, in what he had to hear from Sir George.

They had left the ground, and were proceeding along, Sir George arm in arm with his son, the Colonel and O'Brien following, engaged in

earnest conversation, when Sir George, suddenly turning round, addressed the Lieutenant.

"It has just occurred to me," said he, "that you and Captain Sydney may have something to say to each other."

"Faith," replied Denis, "that Captain Sydney, I can tell you, Sir George, was a fine fellow, and ought to have been an Irishman. I never had a more gallant proposal made to me, or one I should have been so happy to go through with. However, there is an end of *that*, I suppose, as well as of all the rest!"

"I suppose there is—at least for the present," answered Sir George, smiling at the air of regret with which O'Brien conjectured he should smell no gunpowder that night; "and I suppose, also, it will not be necessary for me now to be at the Bull-and-Mouth to-morrow morning."

"Oh no!" said Denis dejectedly; "no; I shall go myself; and Mrs. O'Brien will go without her surprise; but, by the powers! I 'll tell her what a chance she had."

This conversation was wholly unintelligible to Charles and the Colonel. The latter, how-

ever, contrived to get at its meaning from O'Brien, and relished exceedingly his earnest description of a proposition which he evidently regarded, both as a compliment to himself, and a fine trait of bravery.

As they turned their steps in the direction of Cavendish Square, the Lieutenant made a sudden halt.

"I can be of no further service to you, Mr. Ardent," said he; "so, good-night."

Sir George pressed him to accompany them home, but he peremptorily declined the invitation. Charles shook him by the hand,—thanked him for what he had done, — attempted, with faint raillery, to apologize for having done nothing himself, and they separated. But before they had gone a hundred yards, the Lieutenant came running back.

"I am not to trouble myself with the commission you gave me?" he said, addressing Charles.

"No, my good friend," replied Charles; "I'll execute it myself."

"All the better that you can," answered

O'Brien. "A word with *you*, Sir George," he added.

Sir George retired with him to a short distance.

"I have a letter which I was to have conveyed to you, if you had not come among us, and spoiled what we were about. I think I have a sort of an inkling of how matters stand, though I can't make out every thing; and I am much mistaken, if I am not doing a good office to my friend Mr. Ardent, by giving this letter to you, instead of returning it to him. That's my opinion: but if I am wrong, and any mischief comes of it, I shall be ready to answer for my mistake, in any way you or your son may think proper. And now, once more, good-night."

"Good-night," said Sir George, receiving the letter from him, and putting it into his pocket.

Charles, who was availing himself of this brief interval to get from the Colonel some hurried explanations of the things which had taken place, and which explanations the Colo-

nel took care should be as unsatisfactory as need be—never once reflected upon the possible subject of conversation between his father and O'Brien; or he would certainly have claimed from the latter, the restoration of a paper which it could not now be his wish should meet the eyes of the former. The reader will at once surmise, this paper was the identical letter (containing the agonized expression of feelings that no longer existed,) with which he is already acquainted, and that Sir George, when he too became acquainted with it, felt additionally convinced, he had *not* "done his son justice."

They arrived at home. Charles's heart beat quick, as once more he crossed the paternal threshold by his father's side. Nor would his father let him quit his side; for, as if he also were made proud and happy by it, and wished the very domestics to know and share their master's feelings, he still held his arm in his. Thus linked together, they ascended to the room where the family were sitting; and entered it thus, the harbingers of returning peace and gladness to all! The Colonel, too, had

good reason to feel a rejoicing spirit within his own bosom; for this work was his!

But pale and trembling — sinking almost to the earth with agitation — and supported by Lady Ardent and Louisa—there was one in the assembled group whose presence was as a vision, rather than a reality, to the astonished Charles. It was Caroline, herself!

In vain were his mother's swimming eyes turned with rapture to greet a sight dear to her longing heart — the father and son restored to each other; in vain did Louisa stretch forth a hand of welcome, while the other was engaged in the tender office of administering aid;—in vain did his brother Frederick, who had been specially summoned to be a partaker of this domestic jubilee, advance to meet him. Charles, himself, had nor eyes, nor hands, nor thoughts for any but the one beloved object whose appearance at that moment, in that circle, and under such circumstances, made him doubt almost whether it was not all a delusion of the brain!

The secret of years was revealed in the sudden ecstasy of a moment. Springing towards Caroline with an exclamation of wild and half delirious

joy, he seized her hand, covered it with kisses, bathed it with tears, and surrendered himself to the inrush of those intense emotions which the surprise of possessing again the being whom he once believed irrecoverably lost, produced. Caroline, who was hardly sensible of his transports, sighed and wept upon the bosom of Louisa, in a state which showed how true it is that extremes meet; for joy convulsed her delicate frame as fiercely as the deepest sorrow could have done.

Scenes of this kind are dreadfully trying to one's nerves; and if poor Denis had been present, he would have protested, (and might have done so, with great truth,) that there "was no standing it." Grief is at all times contagious; never more so than when the infection is communicated by the softer sex. There is in woman's tears——But why should not the reader's imagination sometimes run before the author's pen? Or, when it cannot do that, come after, and fill up the blanks?

Have the goodness, then, courteous reader, to fancy every thing we were going to say, after the words, "There is in woman's tears—" If

you are not one of the fair sex yourself, the task is easy; for what man is there——You are to finish this question while you are about it. But if you *are* one of the fair sex, the task is easier still; for every woman——Here you can go on, without the least difficulty. In short, we may as well be candid with you, and confess the truth, which is, (most courteous reader!) neither more nor less than this, that finding we could not get on any further ourselves, in the very pathetic scene we had begun, and not choosing to have recourse to the prescriptive expedient of all novel writers in such difficulties, viz. saying, that what we can't say, "may be more easily imagined than described," we resolved to have a device of our own for the nonce; and thus it is that you are put to the trouble of invention. Meanwhile, we will take up the thread of our history at a period a little antecedent to the matters just related, in order to explain how they were brought about.

And here we might digress somewhat, (were we prone to the failing of most writers, that of intolerable self-conceit,) to remark how fertile our own invention has been. For be it ob-

served, we have crowded as many interesting events into four-and-twenty hours, or thereabouts, as would have served some of our tribe for as many months, ay, even years. It really seems almost an age since Mr. Pickthorne and the Colonel went in search of Nicholas Crowe; —since Sir George went to the General;—since he and Lady Ardent had their distressing interview;—since he set off for Caroline, and returned with her to her father;—and since Mr. Pickthorne and Charles, and the Colonel and Charles met; whereas the whole of these occurrences were so admirably contrived, that they have followed each other as naturally, and with as little confusion, as the night follows the day, or the day the night, in the short space mentioned. We leave it to the critics to say whatever handsome things they may think we deserve, for the consummate art we have herein displayed, and proceed to take up our thread.

When Sir George returned from the General's, after having conducted Caroline thither, he found, lying on his library table, a letter from Lady Ardent, penned in the deepest anguish of a wounded spirit, but expressing

withal the noblest sentiments of an exalted one. Those explanations, which his impatient scorn of suspicion rendered it impossible for her to give verbally, were here entered into with touching frankness and affectionate sincerity. The whole chain of circumstances which had wrung a slow and agonizing assent to the apparent criminality of her husband, was detailed with the severe simplicity of reluctant truth, without comment, extenuation, or aggravation. Neither the anonymous letter, nor the contempt in which it was held, till her brother's inquiries seemed to confirm it beyond all contradiction, was suppressed. The concluding sentences of her letter ran thus :—

"Having shown you *how* I erred, (for to doubt that I *have* erred, after what has passed between us, would be to do equal violence to my reason and my heart,) my appeal is, not to your love—if it still survive—not to your compassion,—but to your justice. I was crushed beneath the sudden weight of apparently concurrent evidence. I might have *affected* incredulity; but it was no more in my power to feel it, than to deny that I exist. Proudly as

I stand upon mine own honour, and bitterly as I should feel the humiliation of knowing that you had admitted one thought derogatory to it, yet, believe me, I could forgive the most injurious thoughts that had but a tithe of such warrant for them as I have shown for mine. Give me, then, the benefit of a like impartial judgment; give me, too, the benefit of this—that as your own heart will inform you what its torment would be to believe *me* a guilty creature, doubt not that mine has paid as grievous a penalty in believing you so."

Of all living men, Sir George Ardent was the least capable of nourishing splenetic resentments, or of persisting in a determination to be offended, in spite of his conviction that the matter of offence had been removed. It might be sometimes difficult to produce this conviction, from the morbid and peculiar turn which his sentiments had taken on most subjects; but once produced, the manliness of his character, the vigour of his moral principles, the purity of his feelings, were all so many guarantees for the consequent consistency of his conduct.

It was produced now. He could not disguise from himself, that such circumstances as were brought together in the letter of Lady Ardent, being produced in any court of justice in England, and submitted to the most rigorous test of judicial investigation, would, if incapable of refutation, be held conclusive evidence for establishing the fact to which they applied. Well, then, they stood unrefuted before Lady Ardent; and could she be severely blamed, or blamed at all, for yielding what at most could only be deemed a passive assent?

This was enough. He sought her. The interview was an affecting scene of mutual magnanimity. Sir George condemned himself for not gently removing suspicions which he saw had made such rapid inroads upon her peace and health, when he could have done so by a word almost; and Lady Ardent took shame to herself for having allowed those suspicions to fasten on her mind, when by a word, too, she could have destroyed them in their very birth. Even Mr. Pickthorne was forgiven for his eager haste to inquire into the truth of the affair, in consideration of his known fondness on all

occasions to get at the bottom of other people's secrets.

"Would to Heaven you *had* trusted me!" said Lady Ardent, when Sir George told her the history of Caroline's flight and subsequent retreat. "Or rather, would to Heaven you had been at liberty to trust me! I should have honoured your motives, espoused the cause of that poor girl as warmly as yourself, and," she added, smiling, "have managed it, I think, in some respects better."

"I can well believe that," replied Sir George; "for no one, I am sure, could have managed it worse, after I found Mrs. Leslie was dead."

The next morning Colonel Asper called upon Sir George at an early hour. The circumstance of his having been present when his sister was brought back, had removed from his mind every scruple as to acknowledging his previous acquaintance with the Baronet's proceedings; while the object he had in view seemed to justify whatever risk there might still be of exciting his displeasure. He found him, however, prepared to disclose every thing himself, and only

surprised when the Colonel saved him the trouble, by announcing that he already knew every thing; showing him, at the same time, the twin letter of the celebrated Nicholas Crowe.

"And the General had actually got this perfidious, this nauseous epistle," said Sir George, "when he received me yesterday?"

"Even so," replied the Colonel, laughing; "and I was on my way to, if not actually arrived at, the large White House."

"I only wonder," added Sir George, shrugging his shoulders, "he did not brain me with his crutch! Good God! what beings there are, in this vile world, Colonel, ever on the watch to make us feel that the wilderness is better!"

Colonel Asper, with all the delicacy and circumspection which the occasion required, led the conversation gently to the situation of Charles, describing it in such colours, as were calculated to rouse not only parental anxiety, but personal curiosity. Sir George did not seem much moved, when he merely heard that the same rumours which had reached Lady Ardent and the General, had also travelled

to his son's ears; but when he learned that Caroline was the beloved of Charles; when he saw how that circumstance must have barbed the poisoned shaft of calumny for *his* heart; and when he listened to the recital of the extravagant, though generous, self-sacrifice he was prepared to make, from the mingled impulses of filial love and love's despair, he was deeply touched.

Yet, it was easy to perceive, and the Colonel drew an unfavourable augury from it, that his first feelings were those of anger and mortification;—anger, at the concealment which had been practised by Charles; and mortification, that he should have given any credit to a tale which had not, in his case, the extenuating circumstances that excused the belief of his mother. These feelings, however, gradually disappeared, and gave way to others of a more kindly nature.

He was not, in fact, prepared for such a display of heroic sentiment (misdirected and ill conceived as it was) in Charles; and it seemed to open to him a new view of his character,—a view every way more congenial to his own

nature than that which he had lately taught himself to consider as the true one.

Sir George loved his children with the passionate fondness of a naturally enthusiastic temperament. He was proud of the dawning promise of his eldest son; he doated with feverish delight upon the high-wrought sensibilities he had inwoven, as it were, into every thought and action of Louisa; and there *had* been a time, when he surveyed complacently the buoyant energies of Charles's disposition. An event, therefore, which tended to restore this complacency, — which returned his youngest son to that place in his affections where he had felt an aching void ever since it had been vacant, was hailed by him with an eager desire for its consummation. Hence, there was a gentleness, and an anxiety in his language, when, after a pause, during which all these reflections had been crowding upon his mind, he addressed Colonel Asper, that agreeably surprised him, as being contrary to what he had anticipated from the first indications of his feelings.

"You amaze me greatly," said he, "by what you have told me. Charles and I have

been estranged from each other of late, I hardly know why, except that he was given to frivolity and idle fooleries, which he knew I frowned upon, and therefore shunned my presence; and I permitted him to do so, because I felt we could not meet, as it was proper we should. But this which you have mentioned—And what is it he proposes to do, in furtherance of the chivalrous lunacy which has taken possession of him?" he asked abruptly.

The Colonel put into Sir George's hands the paper he had drawn up in Charles's presence, attested by his signature. It was a paper, which, as Charles himself bitterly exclaimed, after the Colonel's departure, made him a "recorded liar!" for therein he confessed himself the offending party, and the only offending party, where he was as guiltless of offence, as the angels.

"Silly boy!" cried Sir George, as he read it, while his eyes betrayed that his heart and tongue did not speak the same language.—"Silly boy! What could this avail him or me, if there had been need of fraud to shelter infamy?"

"I am afraid we none of us reason very

closely, Sir George," replied the Colonel, "when our reason has to make itself heard above our passions. Your son is at this moment like a desperate gamester who is throwing upon his last stake, and knows that if the throw is against him, the pistol is in his pocket which must end all. The question with such a man is not—how he has come into that situation, but how he shall escape from it—whether by the smiles of fortune, or the frowns of fate?"

"And why has this been given to you, my friend?" said Sir George, musing.

The Colonel explained more clearly than it seemed he had hitherto done, the drift of Charles's conduct, expressing his firm belief, that, in seeking to provoke a duel, his only object was to fling away a life he no longer valued.

"I see, I see," exclaimed Sir George with much agitation.—"Yes, yes," he continued, "you are right, Colonel—that *is* his object—and you must give him a meeting—or rather, as the fictitious case stands, you must call *him* out. Do it at once. He is in no state to be tampered with—his feelings are too much ex-

cited; and, as you justly observe, when a man gets into a situation like this, the question is not—how he came there, but how he shall retrieve himself? Poor fellow! poor fellow! I see how it is! The balance of his mind is gone. He cannot, as you say, reason. One idea, one impression only, possesses him, and, under its delusion, he would seek its gratification by the wildest means. You must do it at once, Colonel; challenge the foolish noble-minded boy, and I—I, Colonel," he added emphatically, "*I* will be your second!"

Sir George was deeply moved; but there was nothing in his emotions which did not promise to work well for the Colonel's ends, who acquiesced at once, therefore, in his suggestion.

"Let it be this evening," he continued, as the Colonel sat down to indite the letter to Charles—"let it be this evening, in some retired spot, where we shall not be interrupted; "for," he continued earnestly, "I do not mean that the meeting shall be as fictitious as the quarrel."

The Colonel ceased writing, and looked up

in the face of Sir George, who was standing over him.

"The meeting shall not be as fictitious as the quarrel!" he exclaimed with astonishment. "Why, what else can it be?"

"Mark me!" replied Sir George, while his countenance assumed a stern aspect, as if some dark and angry feeling had suddenly been awakened — "mark me, — I do not mean to be played upon."

"I would pledge my life and soul upon it," said the Colonel vehemently, "that Charles is as solemnly convinced of what he believes to be the sad necessity of the sacrifice, as he is perfectly sincere in his intention of making it."

"I shall put him to the test," replied Sir George calmly.

"Not surely by requiring—"

"I shall require the full proof," interrupted Sir George; "and therefore I would have all the accompanying forms of meetings of this kind rigorously observed. He shall not know, (and I rely upon your honour for giving effect to my wishes,) till there is, apparently, only a moment between him and eternity, perhaps,

that he is to be snatched from that moment. But understand me well, Colonel. I would not voluntarily exact from him the thing he offers, as a trial out of which I might extract a motive to think otherwise of him than I have done; for, in my mind, a duellist, who levels his pistol at an adversary, is a murderer, — in intention, and in act, a murderer, if he slay him; though I know he has the world's voice in his favour. I choose, however, to have no misgivings — no after doubts, that a rash, impetuous boy is nerved, only in his own fancy, to a task which might shake many a stout heart. In short, as he *must* rise in my estimation by the true performance of this self-imposed duty, I shall guard against being the dupe of either my own or his weakness."

The Colonel said not another word. He saw the inconsistency which he knew it would be useless to combat. The letter was finished, approved of by Sir George, and despatched; after which they settled all the particulars of their own proceedings, both on the ground, and when they retired from it. It was while they were arranging these matters, that Sir George

suddenly proposed that Caroline should be present at their return.

"There must be no heart left to ache," said he; "and least of all a heart that has ached so long, and deserved to ache so little. Your sister is a creature of amiable and pure affections, with a singleness of character which I have rarely found in equal perfection in any of her sex. I would not say so much to her; for I suppose every woman may be spoiled by flattering truths; but had I not been thoroughly convinced of this, as well as of her general worth, I might have pitied her situation as the reluctant wife of Mr. Spencer, but I should certainly have distrusted the sufficiency of her motives in determining to reject him, and so have declined the office I undertook."

The Colonel, who listened with sparkling eyes to this eulogium bestowed upon a sister he tenderly loved, by such an abstemious panegyrist as Sir George, and withal so discriminating a one, was about to reply, when Lady Ardent entered the room. She was immediately made acquainted with all that had passed; and shuddered as she learned the situ-

ation of Charles. At first, she was strongly inclined to dissuade Sir George from pursuing his plan to the extremity he meditated; but yielding, afterwards, to his arguments, and delighted at the prospect of a reconciliation she had so long desired, she took upon herself the somewhat delicate and difficult task of calling at the General's, and bringing Caroline back with her in the carriage. She and Louisa were then to break to her the cause of the invitation, and to arm her for a meeting which, though painful in some respects, would be a happy one in its consequences.

Caroline was surprised and agitated as she saw the well-known equipage of Lady Ardent stop at their door. A thousand vague and undefined fears rushed into her mind; but the General was excessively puzzled to account for the visit. The alarm of the former, however, was soon at an end; and as to the latter, his perplexity subsided into the most placid good humour, when her Ladyship began to chat with him upon his favourite subject, the capture of a terrible gun in one of his Indian campaigns. This gun had cost the General about a hundred

of his best men, before he succeeded (by a series of masterly manœuvres which further cost him several hours, besides exhausting his whole stock of military stratagems,) in making prize of it; and whenever he undertook to tell their history, his narrative generally corresponded with the number of hours consumed in performing them; while the patience of his hearers was sure to be in the same predicament as his stratagems.

Lady Ardent had heard the story so often, that she knew exactly where it was necessary she should say "indeed!" — "dreadful!" — "prodigious!" and so forth, without tasking her attention beyond. Thus fortified, she turned the gun to excellent account; for the General neglected to inveigh, as he would otherwise have done, against Sir George — forget, as he otherwise would not have done, all about Caroline's misconduct; and consented, which never could have been accomplished without the powerful co-operation of the gun, that she should return with her Ladyship to Cavendish Square.

If ever we are tempted to become ourselves the historians of this memorable event, the cap-

ture of the one gun, the world may expect a work such as it has never yet seen. We have ample materials, including some authentic documents concerning the era of the erection of the foundry where the marvellous piece of ordnance was cast; and, above all, we have the precise recollection of the General's looks — his manner — his very words, in relating the exploit himself. It is possible (but we will not bind ourselves by any promise) that this rare and unique narrative may appear in some of the following pages; and if it should!——

CHAPTER VI.

It was about a week after the occurrence we have described, that Colonel Asper one day met Charles in Regent Street. He seemed flustered, and carried in his hand the fragment of what had once been a stick of good dimensions. The Colonel inquired the cause of his irritation, at the same time pointing significantly to the splintered cane.

"It was a pretty thick one," said he, surveying the remains, "but the scoundrel's head was thicker, or I had certainly broken *it* instead."

"May I ask *whose* head has had the benefit of the experiment?" replied the Colonel.

"That rascal — that white-livered, filthy bully of the pen, Mr. Elias Northcott."

"What! he of 'The Scorpion?'" interrupted the Colonel; "your quondam '*good fellow?*'"

"The same," replied Charles, his lip still quivering with rage, and his eyes flashing fire — "the very same gentleman. The reptile thought proper to vomit his pollution over me and mine; so *I* thought proper to thrash him till my stick failed me."

"All as it should be," said the Colonel, laughing; "and yours, I take it, is the twelfth or thirteenth thrashing he has received within the last twelvemonth. I should think he must know the smell of a cudgel or a horsewhip a quarter of a mile off."

"He is certainly," observed Charles, "the best-beaten poltroon that now walks London streets. He has been kicked, caned, horsewhipped, spit upon, and only requires the ceremonies of the pump and the horse-pond to boast of having received, in his single person, all the honours which can await a blackguard at heart."

This little bit of dialogue will supersede the necessity of our saying any more upon the subject of Elias Northcott, save that the delinquency which had procured for him an intimacy with the well-applied vigour of Charles's

arm, was one of those atrociously malignant calumnies, touching himself, his father, and Caroline, that supplied him with his dirty means of living; and that he ventured to bring an action against his assailant, when the jury gave him less than was sufficient, in the way of damages, to pay for the plasters that healed his broken head—for they only awarded him a farthing!

Shakspeare, we believe, or some writer of the "same class," (as we once heard said, by a person who himself belonged to that numerous class who talk nonsense,) has remarked, that the course of true love never runs smooth. And it never does, (as we ourselves know, to our own cost;) for if the course of true love were over a rail-road in June, love itself would find something to fret about in the steam-engine, the locomotive carriage, or the weather.

Those little cherubs in long petticoats (they have been so called, because we are told "the cherubin and seraphin continually do cry,") which are so often the consequences of true love, are universally accused of being "fractious," when their "dear little bowels are

pinched," or their " poor gums want rubbing," to bring their teeth through; and we are practically acquainted with what is meant by a " fractious" darling; but we have no hesitation in saying, that a man or woman who is thoroughly in love, and under sixty, is infinitely more " fractious" than any half-yard of squalling humanity we ever saw suffering either from a pain in the bowels, (which, we can certify, is a very trying pain,) or from cutting teeth, which we have forgotten all about, (though God forbid it should resemble the tooth-ache, which we can never forget, and which that same Shakspeare tells us there was never yet a philosopher could bear patiently.) But to return from this digression to the calamity which suggested it.

Charles and Caroline, from being two of the most miserable lovers that love ever made miserable, had become two of the happiest, by one of those freaks of fortune which so often change sorrow into gladness, and despair into hope. They were walking in the very sunshine of perfect felicity, after having been wandering in the dark through the paths of doubt, fear, and

anxiety; and, in the fulness of renovated joy, they beguiled their own hearts with the belief it would be sunshine all the rest of their journey: even as a traveller, who rejoices when the storm that overtook him is past, looks up to the blue heavens, and persuades himself they will not again be shrouded in tempestuous clouds. Alas, for the hopes of man! The traveller, perhaps, gets wet to the skin before he halts at the house of "good entertainment" for himself and jaded steed, where he intends to sojourn for the night; and our too credulous lovers were standing on the verge of fresh and heavier troubles than those they had vanquished, just at the very moment when they were rioting in the treacherous belief that none could assail them.

It is really lamentable to think how much misery it is in the power of one obstinate, hot-headed old man to inflict. But it is much more lamentable, knowing this, to think how many obstinate, hot-headed old fellows there are in the world; who care no more for the sighs and tears of young people, provided they have their own way, than if sighs and tears were of as

little consequence as the spluttering and whizzing of a piece of green wood burning on a cottage-hearth. Nay, their very barbarity, in age, proves either that they never cried Oh! when young, or that they forget every thing which nearly concerned them in their own "sallad days."

It is undoubtedly quite proper that green heads of eighteen, and from that to two or three-and-twenty, should take counsel in most things from grey heads of sixty and upwards. But, say what you will, frozen hearts cannot judge for those that are full of warm and gushing feelings; chill bloods have no sympathy with the impetuous tide which rolls in burning torrents through youthful veins; and dim eyes, peering through aged spectacles, see all things very differently from the sparkling orbs which passion lights. God forbid we should be the apostles of domestic revolution!—that we should say it is right, because it is so often done, to fly in the face of our tender parents, who must mean every thing for the good of their children, though they sometimes set about it in a way that seems unaccountably more adapted to do

harm; at least, if there be any truth in the proverb, that nobody knows where the shoe pinches so well as the wearer. But to talk rationally upon the subject, which is always best,—would it be a whit more unreasonable, that we should be required to walk like an old man, dress like one, or eat like one, than to love like one, and to marry like one? Yet we are forced to do the latter, when, like dutiful children, we permit our fathers to choose husbands and wives for us, according to *their* notions of what *we* want.

We shall make no apology for this digression, because, besides being extremely ingenious, it is singularly appropriate to what follows.

No sooner was the General informed by his son, (who volunteered to perform the task, little dreaming of the rod he was preparing for his own back,) that Charles was in love with Caroline, and Caroline, of course, in love with Charles, and that they had been in love with each other for two or three years, than he took into his head one of the most perverse fancies that ever addled the wholesome thoughts of a human brain. And the worst of it was, that

when this fancy had fairly taken up its quarters, there was no dislodging it; nay, worse than the worst, if such a figure of speech be allowable, the General, after a time, peremptorily prohibited all attempts to dislodge it. So there it was, like a favourite whom every one hates and detests, but whom no one dare affront, for fear of offending the master of the house; or, like an unsavoury dish at table, an abomination to the eyes and nostrils of all present, save those belonging to the indescribable palate which it is destined to regale.

This fancy flitted into the General's brain in the following form—"that he had been made an ass of:" to wit, that Sir George Ardent knew of his son's love for Caroline, though he himself did not; and, consequently, (a tremendous consequence, by the by, for a man of the General's choleric quality,) that the whole affair of her flight was a thing *contrived*, and afterwards *managed*, by the Baronet, for the sole purpose of getting Mr. Spencer out of the way, that there might be room for Charles. In fact, he was persuaded there had been manœuvring equal, if not superior, to his own, when he cap-

tured that devil of a gun, but in which, unlike that celebrated affair, he had been clearly outgeneralled; a reflection upon his military character which he felt more keenly than the simple annoyance of discovering, as he thought, that he had been made to perform the part of a foolish old father, outwitted by an artful daughter.

There are many men in the world, who, as well as the General, would rather be knocked down and robbed of a hundred pounds, than be *tricked* out of sixpence; for, whatever some simpletons may think or feel, taking mankind at large, the pleasure is *not* "as great in being cheated, as to cheat." Be that as it may, however, it is certain the General waxed exceeding wroth under the goads and stings of the fancy he had adopted.

In vain did the Colonel assure him how the facts really were: he might as well have stood upon the sea-shore when the waves were wildest, and commanded them to be still. In vain he offered to produce evidence of the truth of what he asserted;—(though it is incontestable, there was no evidence to be had one jot better than his own word; but he did

not think of that at the moment)—he might as well have offered, with the expectation of having his offer accepted, to convince a miser of his mistake, who could *not* be convinced, and at the same time, keep the gold which it would make his heart bleed to disgorge. In vain he expostulated; the favourite sultana of an Eastern despot, with the bowstring round her neck, might as well attempt to remonstrate with her affectionate lord upon the inconvenience of being strangled.

"Will nothing satisfy you, Sir?" exclaimed the Colonel, when he had said every thing which he thought ought to satisfy him.

"No, Sir," replied the General, "nothing will satisfy me that I am not a fool—" (a less respectful son might have been tempted to *say*, what the Colonel only caught himself involuntarily *thinking*)—"nothing will satisfy me that there has not been a scandalous, flagitious, paltry, impudent, undutiful, unheard-of plot against my private honour, against my peace, against my lawful authority. The thing is as plain as a flag-staff; and, by my soul! it is too bad."

"Is it likely, Sir—"

"Yes, Sir, it *is* likely! But what do you mean by asking whether a thing is likely, when it is all over?"

"You won't listen to me—"

"What is there to listen to? Nothing!—Yet I could listen to nothing, if it were said sensibly; but I know very well what you want to say; and if you think I'll be made a fool of both ways, have my right eye blinded first, and then my left, that it may not see what has happened to the other, you are mistaken, Harry.—They are both open now, and I'll take care to keep them so."

"Will you listen to me for one minute?"

"An hour, unless you want to contradict me. For *this* is one of the *few* cases in which I will not be contradicted; because I know I am right, and *you* are wrong; so, with this proviso—no contradiction—you may go on."

"I may as well hold my tongue, if that is to be the condition for—"

"Now, who is positive and self-willed, I should like to know? But this is always the case; I've noticed it a hundred times—unless

I give way to you in every thing, you turn sulky, and don't think it worth while to speak at all. Very well—be it so—I can't help it; for by G—d (God forgive me! but your obstinacy would provoke a saint) I *will* have my *own* way here!"

"Why, what is the use, my dear Sir—!"

"None at all — and why do you persist, therefore, in making yourself ridiculous, and me uncomfortable? I tell you again, I now see the plot from beginning to end, though I was hoodwinked at first; and I have been most scurvily treated — shamefully abused: and if you, Harry, had your proper feelings on the subject, you would not wish to make me think otherwise."

"I only wish—"

"I know what you wish, as well as if I were inside you. You wish me to be hoodwinked a little longer, just till every thing is settled to the satisfaction of yourself, and Sir George, and his devil-may-care son, and his pretty daughter, and my own pretty daughter; and when you have all got into your hiding-places, and are ready to cry 'Whoop! catch me who

can!' I may open my eyes to be laughed at by you all. Zounds, Sir! who am I, that you presume to think I will consent to act the part of such a cipher in my own family?"

"It is quite extraordinary—"

"Have a care how you provoke me farther! I'll not be told there is any thing extraordinary in whatever I choose to do or say. The only extraordinary part of the business is your cursed obstinacy, and Sir George's d—d assurance."

In this way, the conversation was carried on till the combatants grew tired of exchanging wordy blows; the Colonel, ineffectually endeavouring to speak, and the General, snapping his speeches short off, that he might finish them himself, by way of exemplifying how patiently he could listen to anything that was reasonable. The cessation of hostilities, under a sort of tacit, rather than expressed, armistice, had continued the better part of half an hour, each of the belligerents employing the interval in putting his forces into order for another skirmish; the General, as usual, when much vexed, see-sawing in his arm-chair, his hands folded over his stomach, and his two thumbs,

propping each other, keeping time with an oscillatory jerk to the swing of the chair. Suddenly, he resumed offensive operations, by the discharge of a single piece of heavy ordnance. It came boom ! upon the Colonel's ears.

" Harry !"

" Sir !"

There was a pause. The chair slowly descended into its proper perpendicular position. The thumbs were separated from their point of contact. The right hand wandered in search of an antique amber snuff-box, which had once belonged to his great-grandfather Roger, of whom honourable mention has been already made, and which the General (for he carried a silver one besides) never used, except upon solemn family occasions; such as giving serious advice to his children, reproving the maids if he thought they were too forward with the footman, or telling the memorable history of his capture of the one gun.

" Harry !" he repeated, in a somewhat milder tone, as he abstracted from the amber snuff-box a copious portion of its contents— " Harry, I am afraid you and I must quarrel."

"Heaven forbid, Sir!" exclaimed the Colonel, not remarkably at his ease, from this ominous beginning.

"Heaven will do as it likes," replied the General, "as I mean to do; hoping I am not unmindful of all it enjoins as our duty here."

The Colonel could as easily have solved the problem of the longitude, as divined at that moment what was to follow from this exordium. But he had a presentiment that something not very agreeable was coming, and was in no hurry, therefore, to hasten its arrival.

"Mr. Charles Ardent shall NEVER marry Caroline Asper!" said the General.

There was a formidable emphasis on the word "never," accompanied with a resolute return of the amber snuff-box to the waistcoat-pocket, which denoted a foregone conclusion not very likely to be shaken.

"She may flee from me again," continued the General; "and if she does, I cannot help it; for I can put no fetters on her feet, if I am unable to fetter her will in the bonds of duty; *but*, if she does, she shall carry with her that

which will strew the path she takes with sharpest thorns—my CURSE!"

"I entreat you, Sir," said the Colonel, "to moderate, to suspend, your resentment."

"Hear me out, Harry!" replied the General, while there was something fearful in his violently suppressed agitation—"hear me out. The blood of an Ardent shall NEVER mingle with that of an Asper!" and his eyes seemed starting from their orbits, as he turned them upon his son.

The Colonel's features assumed an indignant expression, and his chest heaved as he listened to this denunciation. Man is composed of too stern materials to bend in meekness under injuries, even though they are inflicted by the hand whence every benefit has come. The submission that may belong to his individual character is lost in the prerogative of his general nature, which teaches him to spurn at oppression.

"If, Sir, I am to interpret your words," he replied, in a voice tremulous from a thousand conflicting emotions, "into a prohibition of all my hopes, as connected with Miss Ardent—"

"You will set them at nought!" interrupted the General, with one of those puffs which gave vent to the tornado within. "Very well, Harry!—things must take their course in this world, and we must abide their consequences. I can't put one end of a chain round your leg, and the other into a stone wall, in an underground dungeon, as my ancestors, the great feudal barons D'Haspur, could have done to *their* sons, when they lived in their own castles, and went forth attended by their thousand men-at-arms. I know I can't do this; neither can I make you dutiful, Harry, by cutting you off with a shilling, which I would do; for my great-grandfather Roger, whose amber snuff-box is the only relic of his personal goods and chattels that has descended to me, gathered up the fragments of the property of the once potent house of D'Haspur, and entailed them upon his descendants in the right line—so, what there is, you must have in spite of me, at my death; but though I can do none of these things, to make you sensible of the affection you owe me, there *is* one thing I can do, and that is, Sir, I can go down to my grave with maledictions on my

lips for your disobedience! Yes, Sir—I can do this—and, by my soul! as I now live—"

"Spare me the dreadful declaration," exclaimed the Colonel, equally shocked and alarmed at the violence of his father; "we will talk of these matters another time."

"Never dare to mention the subject again!" replied the General, rising from his chair. "I am not of an unforgiving disposition—my weakness lies the other way—but I'll forgive the man who strikes me and calls me coward, when I forgive Sir George Ardent the mean wrong he has done me, in plotting underhand with my own children against my just authority over them!"

With these words he quitted the room, leaving the Colonel in utter consternation at the vindictive bitterness of his feelings.

CHAPTER VII.

THE General soon gave an unequivocal proof of the implacable character of his resentment; for the very next day he addressed a letter to Sir George Ardent, expressing, in language not less strong than that he had used to his son, his sense of the supposed injury he had received, and the resolution to which he had come in consequence.

Sir George, though offended by the tone of this communication, and irritated at the idea of fresh embarrassments arising out of transactions which had already been fertile enough in vexations, but which he had imagined were happily terminated for ever, resolved to enter into frank explanations with the General. He was prompted to this, not so much from any desire to exonerate himself, as from an

amiable wish to prevent, if possible, the renewal of troubles and disappointments to the young people, who would be made innocent sufferers for an imaginary offence.

He wrote, therefore, a long letter in reply to the General's, and carefully worded it in such a way, that while it was calculated to carry conviction to the most prejudiced mind, it should not be capable of fretting even the most testy one. The letter was returned unopened! The grossness of this insult, even, he would not allow to become an insuperable barrier to further efforts at conciliation. Lady Ardent, by his suggestion, cheerfully undertook to find the means of obtaining a personal interview with the General; and she was indefatigable in her endeavours to do so, but always without success. At length, a positive refusal to see her, rudely conveyed in a verbal message by a servant, convinced both herself and Sir George, that they would be wanting in due respect to themselves to think of persevering in their kind but fruitless mediation.

The Colonel, too, whose leave of absence from his regiment was nearly expired, and who

looked forward with horror to the idea of quitting London under the circumstances in which he was now placed, endeavoured repeatedly, in spite of his father's commands to the contrary, to convince him of his error. In vain. Mutual friends were solicited, both by him and Charles, to become intercessors. They did so: but equally in vain.

In fact, the General had taken the most effectual method possible, to keep his opinions; that of admitting no parley with them. He resolved to hear nothing; and then he knew, he was in no danger of being surprised into a recantation. No matter how skilfully soever the approaches to the entrenched citadel of his mistake might be made—no matter how successfully soever the besieging party might get under its very walls—the moment they showed themselves, the instant their designs were apparent, a desperate sally was made from the garrison, and all the guns spiked. To drop our metaphor, (which we have used in compliment to the General himself,) no sooner did a considerate friend, who might have undertaken the office of a remonstrant, venture to disclose his

mission by mentioning the name of Sir George Ardent, than the General stopped him with the declaration, that he should receive as a personal affront another word upon the subject.

It was not until there could be no mistaking the unalterable intentions of the General, that Sir George felt himself called upon to assert his own dignity. Up to a certain point, he had shown that he was prepared to keep down individual feelings for the sake of others; but beyond that point, he saw the sacrifice must be borne in common. He could not sully the honour of his family, nor expose himself to sinister insinuations, by permitting that an intercourse should continue, which had not the sanction of General Asper. Under other circumstances, indeed, the proudest house in England, the wealthiest and the noblest alliance which the realm could boast, he would have turned his back upon, with only a tithe part of the motive he had to do so here; and if he did *not* turn his back upon the "once potent house of D'Haspur," it was because he put a calm, a gentle construction upon an indignity that menaced the happiness of those he

loved, and was founded upon a misconception which time might yet remove. Still, so long as the misconception lasted, so long the indignity must continue, and there was no middle course for him to pursue. He weighed all these considerations with more than his wonted forbearance in such cases, before his mandate went forth, that there must be a suspension of all intercourse between the members of the two families, till General Asper saw reason to revoke the decision to which he had come.

Severe was the trial that followed, to all; but it was borne with comparative resignation by all, save one—the Colonel. The deep respect he felt for Sir George—the silent acquiescence which his reason yielded to the imperative necessity of the case, were insufficient to stifle his resentful impatience of injustice, or control the effervescence of feelings, which prompted him to set at defiance both the original tyranny, and the consequent interdict. With all the eloquence which love could inspire, and powerfully seconded by the co-operation of Charles, he strove to convince Sir George, there was not the least occasion for the

defensive position he had taken up; arguing very luminously upon the difference between actions that spring from just causes, and those which, being founded in error, are themselves a species of nonentity.

Sir George could not be made to see this nice distinction with sufficient clearness; or to comprehend, that, if a gentleman were to receive an unmerited castigation under a mistake, he ought to disregard it in consideration of the blunder. There was no alternative, therefore, but for the Colonel to consent to return to Ireland, without taking leave of Louisa, either personally or by letter; and to promise, that, while absent, he would abstain from all communication with her, until he had Sir George's permission. He gave his consent, and his promise, with the heavy grief of an honourable heart, which knew that neither would be violated. But he consoled himself with looking forward to the possibility, that time would be able to smuggle truth into his father's head, at some auspicious moment when he might be casting up his accounts in this world, to see

what sort of a balance sheet he could take with him to the next.

The parting between him and the General was as cold as winter. To do them both justice, there was no affectation of sensibility on either side. The General, convinced he had not been treated with the respect due to an affectionate father, assumed the attitude of an offended one. The Colonel, who knew he had not experienced the indulgence deserved by a dutiful and only son, of course, took care of his own dignity. Hence, when the moment of separation arrived, there was nothing for the eyes or tongue to do; the whole ceremony being performed by the hands, which came into mutual contact, with a touch as light and flying as the fingers of "divine Cecilia," sweeping over the strings of her lyre; or as those of two Caledonian friends, in the middle ages, when our northern brethren were all supposed liable to that with which Voltaire makes Brutus reproach Cassius, and which gave such offence to his ignorant delicacy.

"There is a proud, obstinate, passionate

puppy for you !" exclaimed the General, as he stood at the drawing-room window, and saw the postchaise drive off. " I have not spoken a word to him these three days, and still he keeps up his rancorous pet—" (straining his eyes to catch a last glimpse of the wheels, as they rolled round the corner of the next street,) —" and can go back to Ireland without saying good b'ye !"

It was a " curious coincidence,"—but precisely the same thoughts were passing in the Colonel's mind, as he looked through the glass at the back of the chaise, to see if his father was at the window.

"And thus !" said he, " he can part with me ! when at his time of life, and with his infirmities, it is possible he may never see me again ! Well, well—he can't say I have deserved it ; for since Tuesday, and this is Saturday, I have carefully avoided his presence, in order that I might *not* do any thing to vex him."

If they could have heard each other !—But this is too often the way with us all. We say what we want to say, at wrong times, or in wrong places. What was the use of the Gene-

ral and his son grumbling at each other, when both were out of hearing?

Charles bore *his* lot with something of that elasticity of character which resisted the pressure of every trouble. Besides, he was like a gambler in the funds, who has an account of gains to set against his losses. His return to the bosom of his family, — the daily increasing cordiality between him and Sir George, and the sanction of his love (clouded and gloomy as were its present prospects) by his father, were all so many "lucky hits," to counterbalance the one "unfortunate speculation." There is nothing so certain, as that the heart *does* keep this kind of debtor and creditor account with itself; and it is only when its books show an overwhelming array of bad debts, that it breaks, and becomes bankrupt. In all other cases, joys and troubles are nicely adjusted by us, so as to make it worth while to struggle on a little longer.

Even Caroline was in a condition to make a somewhat similar show of the affairs of *her* heart. Released for ever from the addresses of Mr. Spencer, she was no longer compelled to

practise an irksome duplicity. She would have been happier, if the exasperating suspicions of the General had not come in the way; but there had very recently been a time when she was less happy; and she could easily imagine circumstances, (without resorting to the art of ingenious self-tormenting,) which might make her sigh for the sad privilege she now enjoyed, as an exchange ardently to be desired.

Moreover, it must be remembered what we have elsewhere said, that it "cost her no effort to exemplify in her whole conduct the great principle upon which Epictetus founded his doctrine of human happiness;" and that this disposition was, "simply the being contented with her measure of felicity, such as it might present itself, without one repining sigh idly wasted upon the thought that there was room for more." In many a pensive hour she recalled the memory of her forbidden lover with tears; but they were always dried by the hope that he would soon be relieved from his proscription, and followed by the reflection, that *once*, his was a name that dared not pass her

lips, where now his and her own griefs found sympathy.

The placid brow and gentle air of Louisa, and the sadness of her smile, alone betrayed the depth of *her* feelings, for she gave them no tongue; her only request, when she received from her beloved father his wishes on the subject, being, that it might never be mentioned after in her presence. Had it been his will that she should renounce her heart's idol for aye, she would have done it, almost without asking why she was thus bidden. So, she would have gone unto death, or submitted herself to any trials of mind or body he could exact from her. But, beyond this submission of *her* will to *his*, she was no mistress of herself. There were thoughts and recollections, treasured memories of the soul, bright hopes drooping to decay, pale fears rearing themselves in their places, and a pining anguish of the heart, which worked, silently, a change in her general deportment, as well as in her looks, that could not escape the anxious eyes of either Sir George or Lady Ardent. The former

trembled, lest a world he despised should enrol in its spurious calendar another martyr to the tyranny of opinion; and the latter wept, in prophetic sorrow, many lonely tears over the bier of another victim to the secret pangs of love.

CHAPTER VIII.

I NEVER take up a newspaper, and cast my eyes over that little corner of its ample columns, devoted to the registering of "Births, Marriages, and Deaths,"—(by the by, the order of succession is bad, and the Press ought to look to it,—births before marriages, is a sort of typographical immorality)—without thinking what an epitome it is of this world's greatest concerns. To be born,—to perpetuate our kind,—then to make room for them, by going—we know not whither, are the three great landmarks of our earthly condition; all its intermediate events being mere accidents of that condition, and very few of them of any moment beyond a fictitious importance in our own estimation. But death is the huge disturber of things as they are; for a man shall hardly be

such a cloud-dropped animal, so dissevered from his race, so single a link, so mere a unit, that he can fall out of the ranks of life, and no one be the better or worse for his departure. It only requires a little bestirring of the fancy, when we read that Mr. Sniggersnooks the soap-boiler is dead, to muster a crowd of moving circumstances, a host of changes, a legion of novelties, in mind, body, or estate, all flowing from the solitary fact of Mr. Sniggersnooks being in his coffin.

If such, however, be the consequences of that grisly presence, in the humble walks of plebeian life, what must they be in palaces, and courts, in cabinets, and the mansions of the mighty? When a great man steps from his pedestal to his grave, what a jostling, and crossing, and crowding there is among the magnates who remain, to get upon the vacant place. It seems wonderful, indeed, how the defunct possessor was able to stay there himself, seeing the keen and hungry mob that start for the prize the moment it becomes open to competition.

A scene like this (and the reader will now discover what gave rise to the above moral

reflections) presented itself, when the long-expected death of the Earl of Villopoer took place; or rather, it had been exhibiting for several months before, during that gradual decline of his health which too surely betokened his approaching dissolution.

The ministerial crisis was foreseen; and the ministerial struggle had been partly going on between the Strathsay party, and Cranstoun and his friends. It was not, however, till the noble Earl had actually breathed his last, that the tug of political strife began. Lord Villopoer expired at ten minutes to twelve, on Saturday the 5th of ——, in the year 182—; (we have a reason for being thus particular;) and at ten minutes *after* twelve, Lord Delonne, Sydney Oxford, the Earl of Placeankeepit, with about half a dozen of the less influential members of the Government, were in close council at Strathsay House.

It could hardly be said they met to deliberate, because there was no second opinion among them upon the only point they had assembled to decide, viz.—who was *not* to be Prime Minister. They had, long since, unani-

mously agreed that Cranstoun was *not*. But it is not to be hence inferred there was the same distinct understanding upon another point —who *was* to be. Far from it; for, with that excessive modesty which so commonly hangs about statesmen out of place, (and the cabal, collectively, were out of *the* place, though they were all in place,) they here insisted upon giving the preference to each other; while each declared, in his turn, that he was actuated solely by public motives, looking exclusively to the good of the country, and utterly above all considerations of personal ambition.

The Duke of Strathsay, indeed, went so far as to declare, that *he must be mad*, to think of aspiring to a post for which he was totally disqualified, having passed his whole life in camps; where, certainly, the science of civil government, and the practical knowledge of those things which most nearly concern the vital interests of a great commercial and manufacturing state, are not to be learned.

Lord Delonne said *he* was too old to engage in the arduous duties of a station which the peculiar aspect of the times rendered one of

fearful responsibility; and, in fact, he had long meditated to retire from public life altogether, whenever he could conscientiously satisfy himself he might do so.

Sydney Oxford, with the look of a man who felt satisfied that every one believed what he was saying, except himself, expressed his anxious hope, that whatever arrangements might take place, they would be of such a nature as to allow his friend Cranstoun to continue a servant of the Crown, if it were for no other reason than that he might continue to lead the House of Commons, where his unrivalled talents, his powerful eloquence, and his knowledge of public business, gave him such just and salutary influence.

The Earl of Placeankeepit—(a statesman born with an hereditary disposition to take root in the rich, fat, lazy soil of sinecures and pensions, and who filled one office for which he was unfit, as the tenure by which he held others, that did not require to be filled at all,) —declared it as his firm conviction, that no administration of which Mr. Cranstoun was at the head, could keep together, and it behoved

those who had any thing to lose by giving him their support, to consider well which they preferred. For his own part, he did not believe it possible that the principles which had kept himself and his father in place for more than half a century, with only a few interruptions, and those of short duration, would flourish in a Cranstoun cabinet; therefore, he, for one, would never assist in forming such a cabinet.

These were the sentiments of the four leading members of the cabal; and they were echoed by the half-dozen who were permitted to flatter themselves with the notion that they were assisting the chiefs, by delivering their own opinions. One of these half-dozen was Sir Canterbury St. John, who has been already introduced to the reader's notice; and another was Viscount Crowther, the heir, it was supposed, of a hundred thousand a-year, but a pensioner of not more than fifteen hundred during the lifetime of his father, the Earl of Crossdale.

Viscount Crowther joined the cabal, as the representative of the old Earl; and as the latter was further represented in the House of

Commons, by some eight or ten *independent* members of that popular branch of the legislature, his adhesion to the Strathsay party was of corresponding importance. As for the Viscount, he was more in his element when dangling at the heels of an opera dancer, in pursuit of favours he was content to pay for at a price which satisfied him he had them to himself, though half the town knew to the contrary, than in meddling with political matters. He had the weakest head (not even excepting that of his brother-in-law, Sir Canterbury St. John,) with which it ever pleased Providence to afflict one of the aristocracy; while his vacant face, and vulgar thread-bare attire, (with shrunk-up, washing pantaloons, darned cotton stockings, and cobbled, low-quartered shoes,) added to a mean, diminutive figure, gave him the appearance of a tailor just slipped off his shop-board.

"*I must say*," observed the Duke of Strathsay, "that with all my regard for Mr. Cranstoun, and no man thinks more highly of him than I do, I should feel it impossible to serve *under* him, should it be his Majesty's pleasure to call him to the head of his councils. *I am*

satisfied, that in making this declaration, I am influenced by no personal motives; but there are questions of political consideration, questions which have long been regarded as tests of political principle among official men, which I cannot reconcile it to my notions of the duty imposed upon all public men, situated as we find ourselves, to disregard; and *I must say*, Mr. Cranstoun's known predilections with regard to some of those questions, and one in particular, are such, as must lead to the conclusion, that a cabinet directed by him would, at least, be favourably inclined, if not secretly pledged, to the carrying of them."

"And your Grace will allow me to observe," said Lord Delonne, "that I doubt exceedingly whether the country would give its confidence to a ministry with Mr. Cranstoun at its head; for, respectable as I readily allow that gentleman to be, and with no disposition, God knows, to depreciate the sort of talent in which he excels, that of a fluent talker, with, occasionally, a good deal of smartness, and some theatrical effect, there is yet too much of the political adventurer about him, too much of the intriguer, too

much of the statesman who would lean upon democratical influence for support, to conciliate the only support to which any British minister can safely trust,—that of the old, illustrious, staunch, and landed Tories. I am aware Mr. Cranstoun calls himself one of these Tories—"

"Not one of the old, illustrious, or landed Tories," interrupted the Earl of Placeankeepit, with a sneer.

"Perhaps not," resumed Lord Delonne, with a smile more significantly sarcastic, than the sneer of the Earl of Placeankeepit—"perhaps not; but a Tory, certainly, and a staunch Tory, I suppose, according to his own definition of the word. Be that as it may, however, *I know* he does not possess the confidence of the true Tories; and I know also he does not deserve to possess it. My distrust of Mr. Cranstoun's principles I have never disguised on any occasion, at any time, or in any place, where I considered it incumbent upon me, as an honest man, to avow it. We were bred in the same school, it is true; we were disciples of the same great master; but he has since strayed from the broad path—he has mingled

heresies with the pure creed he then imbibed—he has not within him the holy *shekinah* of toryism, as he once had, and therefore *I* will not be found beneath the banner he is unfurling. I am an old man now; but as I have lived, so will I die—the feeble, but determined opponent of all innovation, where, in my conscience, I believe the first change that is made will be the first blow at the heart of the British Constitution.—'Dum memor ipse mei, dum spiritus hos reget artus.'"

The venerable Earl shed tears as he concluded. But the assembly were less moved at the sight than might have been expected. Probably, because they had always seen him do the same thing whenever he spoke of himself, and the honesty of his political sentiments.

"There is a wide difference," observed the Duke of Strathsay, "between serving with, and serving under, a colleague; otherwise, it might be thought that we who have been so many years associated with Mr. Cranstoun in the cabinet, are strangely fastidious just now. *But I must say*, it is perfectly consistent to act *with* a man, and to refuse to act *under* him."

"Perfectly consistent!" exclaimed Viscount Crowther.

"Perfectly consistent!" echoed Sir Canterbury St. John; and "perfectly consistent!" repeated all the rest.

"*My* situation," said Sydney Oxford, "is particularly inconvenient to my own feelings on this occasion. I have the highest personal regard for Cranstoun, and should lament, exceedingly, any untoward circumstance which compelled me to act in seeming contradiction to that regard. But these are the peculiar circumstances in which I am placed. *My* department would necessarily bring me into frequent collision with him (supposing he were at the head of the government,) upon that very question, and in relation to those very principles, where we are directly opposed to each other. Hence the utter impossibility of my continuing to hold the office I now do. True, Cranstoun would be willing (for he has already intimated as much to me *in a confidential communication*,) to get over this difficulty, by tendering for my acceptance any other department where there would be no

such inconvenience as that to which I have referred; but the truth is, I should not care to hold any other appointment. I am attached to the duties of the one I do hold; and though I should be sorry to embarrass Cranstoun, who has conducted himself towards me with the highest honour, and most perfect frankness at all times, I feel I cannot give him my humble support, without a greater sacrifice of personal convenience than I think I am fairly called upon to make."

"Suppose things come to the crisis we are anticipating," said the Earl of Placeankeepit, "*can* Cranstoun do without us? Because, if so, it may be as well just to consider what we shall gain by showing our teeth."

"I have weighed that matter well," replied Lord Delonne, "and I am satisfied he can form none other than a piebald cabinet, by an unnatural union with what he will call the *moderate* Whigs."

"That is," said Sydney Oxford, laughing, "those *very* moderate Whigs, such as the Marquis of Downlands and his friends, with whom patriotism stands so much higher than

party, that they are always ready at a moment's notice to serve their country by deserting their party."

"And suppose," continued the prudent Earl of Placeankeepit, who was for running no unnecessary risks in the business—"suppose Cranstoun retires; can *we* do without him? For, you see, he fills a conspicuous place in the public eye, and the whole country gives him credit for being already, in effect, the directing mind of the Government. I do not say he is so; but I can hardly say there would be *no* difficulty in filling his place, or *no* danger from his secession."

"My dear Placeankeepit," said Sydney Oxford, "you are perfectly right, and I have given a very anxious consideration to that very point. I am afraid, from what I know of Cranstoun's character, and more especially from the knowledge I have recently had of his expectations, in connexion with that event which we all so deeply lament, the death of the Earl of Villopoer, that his decision is irrevocably taken; and I have no hesitation in saying, that whatever might be the strength of any administration of

which he formed a part, *exclusively* of his co-operation, it would be infinitely greater with it: but notwithstanding this admission, I am not prepared to go so far as to concede, that a ministry could not stand, and stand firmly, too, even with Cranstoun enrolled among the ranks of its opponents."

"Clearly, my dear Oxford," said the Duke of Strathsay—"clearly—*you* would lead the Commons, and I could name two or three, who would conduct Cranstoun's particular department with an efficiency no way inferior to himself, though not, perhaps, with equal brilliancy."

"Brilliancy!" exclaimed Lord Delonne, "the mock glitter and false sparkle of the diamond, without its intrinsic costliness! Mr. Cranstoun's qualities are all superficial. His acquirements are various, but not solid; elegant, but not profound. He is master of antithesis, pun, repartee, irony; but the dazzling coruscations of wit have never played around him. He possesses fluency of language, and his diction is sometimes ambitiously ornamental—but the former frequently betrays him into prolixity, and the latter, into mere declamation.

Among schoolmen, he might have been pre-eminent for evasive disputation, and plausible sophistry; but so little fixed are his principles, that he is consistent in nothing but his inconsistency. His whole public life has been one tissue of variable and fluctuating politics—of changeable and uncertain views—of pliant versatility and heartless fidelity. If he were asked, in what creed he would choose to die, I believe he would be perplexed whether to declare in favour of the Lutheran, the Calvinistic, or the Catholic. I speak nothing now of Mr. Cranstoun, which I have not been ready to say heretofore, on all proper occasions; and I call God to witness, I have uttered my sentiments in the sincerity of my heart, without one atom of ill will towards my right honourable colleague."

Again the tears came into his eyes. But there were those present, who believed the venerable Earl had neither forgotten nor forgiven Cranstoun's incautious railleries. Sydney Oxford, meanwhile, had been considering how he should reply to the Duke's flattering intimation, that he could lead the Commons, in the event of Cranstoun's retirement.

"I should most reluctantly," said he, addressing his Grace, "and with unfeigned doubts of my competency for the task, take upon myself so perilous and so arduous an office; but —" and there came a pause, while Hypocrisy was covering her face with the veil of modesty—"but I would shrink from no toils, I would shun no hazards, I would decline no danger, where, by incurring toil, hazard, and danger, I could be of service to my country. I am almost tempted to add, however, I should despair of being able to *serve* the country, in that way, except under the auspices of him who SAVED it. Will your Grace understand me?"

A general cry of Hear! hear! (so natural among assembled senators, even when not in the senate,) followed the adroit declaration and question of Sydney Oxford.

"You know my sentiments upon this subject," replied the Duke of Strathsay, "and you will not suspect me of coquetting with you. I have already said, and I repeat it, that it would be *absolute insanity* in me to aspire to the office of Premier. No—no—I shall play my part to

better purpose where I am; but," added his Grace emphatically, "we should be resolved on something which we *are* willing to have, as well as being agreed upon that which we will *not* have."

The discussion now took another turn; and as it seemed that neither the Duke of Strathsay, who was again pressed upon the subject, nor any of his followers, would stand forward as a candidate for the distinction from which they had excluded Cranstoun, by anticipation, (as far as their vote could operate in the way of exclusion,) the merits and capacity of various other individuals were freely canvassed. But it was evident, from the names successively proposed, that what they wanted was a King Log,—a nominal chief—a political cipher; one whose pedigree would confer high aristocratical rank, but whose talents would cast no invidious shadow.

Their choice ultimately centered in the Duke of Hereford, a nobleman illustrious for his ancestry, but distinguished for nothing else save his princely revenues, and high Tory principles. Placed at the head of an administration, the

Duke of Hereford would have been a *fac simile* of the Sovereign himself—a mere phantom, in whose name, every thing would be done, and by whose authority and influence,—nothing. Better he, than Cranstoun, however, in whom dwelt such a supremacy of mind, that, like a victorious General, he would have run away with all the glory, of which there could have been none, but for the bravery, discipline, brains, blood, and sinews of his army.

CHAPTER IX.

It is one of the consequences of living in a free country, where every man enjoys the privilege of taking a lively interest in his neighbour's concerns, that there is no such thing as being able to attend to them ourselves in private. "How are we going on at home?" inquired a loyal subject of his Majesty, of a friend who belonged, he knew, to this class of universal philanthropists. "Why, things are come to a crisis, I think," was the reply; "for, if you make haste back, you will be in time to catch your wife in bed with your new lodger!" He did so; and surprised the guilty pair, as Vulcan did Mars and Venus; but till that moment, though living in the house, he had never suspected, or seen cause to suspect, the customary beginnings of such endings. Thanks, how-

ever, to the invaluable privilege we have mentioned, he had a neighbour who could *tell* him how matters were " going on at home."

By the exercise of this same privilege, (it must not be supposed we are making any allusion to that branch of the public expenditure which is denominated " secret service money,") Cranstoun was duly and immediately apprised of the meeting at Strathsay House, of the discussions that took place there, and of the final resolution in which those discussions terminated. He saw, at once, his position; though as it was not materially different from the one in which he expected to find himself, he was not taken by surprise. It grieved him, nevertheless, to discover so much hostility among his colleagues, masked, as it had been, under apparent cordiality, and the semblance of directly contrary feelings.

He did not, however, rank Sydney Oxford with his opponents; for he had given him not only warm assurances of esteem and confidence, but had several times spoken unreservedly of the gratifying reward which must await a long life of public service, in the

event of Lord Villopoer's decease. It was in these moments that Cranstoun, with the openness and candour which pre-eminently characterised him, and in which he loved to indulge, when he believed he might do so with impunity, confessed the honourable ambition of his soul, and confided to Oxford the avowal, should circumstances defeat its attainment, of his fixed determination to withdraw from public life altogether.

Oxford, with an earnestness which could not, in Cranstoun's mind, have any taint of duplicity, encouraged his hopes, while he deprecated the idea of his abandoning politics, even supposing obstacles were to present themselves to their immediate fruition. He wondered, therefore, to find him with the knot of malcontents at Strathsay House; though, whatever might be the supposed necessity or expediency of his presence there, he doubted not, when the decisive moment came, to see him among the ranks of his own supporters.

Meanwhile, he was actively employed in strengthening his position. He was aware the secession from the cabinet of the Duke of Strath-

say, Lord Delonne, the Earl of Placeankeepit, (followed, as it would be, by the withdrawal of support by many of the most influential members of the Tory party,) would so cripple his resources, that it would be morally impossible to fill the chasm out of the same party. He had no alternative, consequently, but to do that which Lord Delonne had early foreseen he must do, make advances to the "moderate Whigs." This necessity galled him to the quick; the more so, because he had a contempt for, and a distrust of, coalitions where he knew there could be no real fusion of principles, but only a discordant mingling of opinions, and a mutually suspicious surrender of what might be considered neutral points.

His feelings betrayed themselves so strongly in his first overtures to his new friends, (though they were made, when he had once determined they should be made, without any reservations or ambiguities,) that the difficulties of approximation seemed insuperable. There was a haughtiness, an impatience, in the tone of his communications, akin to the proud submission with which Caius Marcius begged the "sweet

voices" of the Roman citizens. His necessities were, at once, so apparent, and so obviously ill-brooked by himself, that they who were solicited were more offended than pleased at being sought.

At length, however, a tangible basis for negotiation was obtained. The "moderate Whigs" contrived to discover that they might ally themselves with a disciple of Pitt, without making the bones of Fox tremble with indignation in the tomb. Such offers of support, from the party generally,—such assents, as to taking office, from some of its leading members, were made, that Cranstoun, thus fortified, in addition to further support from certain "moderate Tories," saw himself in a condition to command the elements of a cabinet sufficiently strong to carry on the business of the country, till there should be time for repentance to work its usual beneficial results among some of the recusants.

He was ill at ease with himself, however. He hardly rejoiced at his success; for he felt it had been accomplished by such means as he ought not to have been reduced to the alternative of employing. His triumph was over old

and natural friends, by the assistance of new and unnatural ones. He was compelled to acknowledge, that he had paid a questionable price for his victory. It was true, he had made few concessions compared with those he had received; but it would have been a prouder conquest had it been achieved without any. There were moments when this consideration so diminished its value, that a very slight provocation would have sufficed to make him renounce it altogether. And, it must reluctantly be confessed, his glory as a statesman would have shone all the brighter if he had; while it is almost certain, the course of events would ultimately have placed the sceptre of ministerial sovereignty in his hands, without the mortification of receiving it from those of the "moderate Whigs."

The Strathsay party were, of course, well informed of these negotiations in their origin, progress, and termination; nor was the Earl of Placeankeepit the only one among them who began to suspect they had "reckoned without their host," as his Lordship familiarly expressed it, in conversing upon the sub-

ject with Lord Delonne. However, by one of those fictions of etiquette which are made to supersede moral and physical evidence, (things that are, being assumed as non-existing, and things which are not, standing for realities,) neither Cranstoun and his friends, on the one hand, nor the Duke of Strathsay, and the cabal, on the other, permitted it to appear that they were at all apprised of each other's proceedings. They met, during this interregnum, in the Council-chamber, in Parliament, at their respective offices, and in general society, as if the same unanimity of sentiment, the same cordiality of feeling, which had animated them while the Earl of Villopoer lived, continued unimpaired. None but your thoroughbred politician can go through this hideous masquerade of the heart! None but your profound statesmen, who are perfect masters of the mystery which teaches tongues and eyes to betray neither thoughts nor feelings, can drop an impenetrable veil between what they say and what they think.

It was a necessary consequence of this reciprocal jesuitism, that when Cranstoun received

his Majesty's commands to re-construct the Cabinet, (tantamount to receiving the appointment of Prime Minister,) he not only communicated the intelligence to his colleagues, with the same grave formality as if he had been wholly unconscious of any personal hostility on their part, but invited them, with all the customary official earnestness, to assist him with their advice in carrying those commands into effect.

The Duke of Strathsay either was, or pretended to be, ignorant of the fact, that when a minister, or an individual who is not a minister, is directed by the Sovereign to lay before him, for his approbation, the names of such persons as may be considered competent to constitute the executive government, the minister, or individual, so honoured, is considered as forming his OWN administration. His Grace's reply, therefore, to Cranstoun's communication was confined to an inquiry upon this point; and when Cranstoun's answer intimated what the usage was, without saying anything about departing from it in the present instance, remarking only, that whatever arrangements they

might feel it their duty to submit to the King, must be considered as contingent upon His Majesty's approval, another meeting of the malcontents was summoned, in all haste, at Strathsay House.

They all attended, *except Sydney Oxford. He* was detained by *official business of such urgency*, that he was compelled to absent himself. But he did not deprive them of the benefit of his advice. His letter to the Duke of Strathsay concluded thus:

"Whatever is determined upon in this painfully important matter, I would suggest that every *appearance of acting in concert* should be scrupulously avoided. It would be neither respectful towards His Majesty, nor satisfactory to the country at large. As regards His Majesty, it would look like a factious proceeding, adopted to deprive him of the exercise of his prerogative in choosing his ministers, by surrounding that choice with apparently insurmountable difficulties; and as regards the country, we should risk the odium of a *premeditated* sacrifice of public duty to private feelings. In both cases, there are great interests at stake;

and our future measures will be more or less difficult of execution, according as our first step is prudently taken."

"Oxford is right," said the Duke of Strathsay, after reading his letter aloud; "we must *not* be supposed to have entered into any league against Mr. Cranstoun; as indeed we have not,—for I am sure I can say of all, what is true with respect to myself, that, *singly*, I would have adopted the course I intend to adopt."

"It does not follow," observed Lord Delonne, "that because four or five persons, or any larger number, agree in their views of a particular case, there must be previous concert or deliberate connivance. *I*, too, can say with your Grace, (and I call God to witness, most truly,) that, singly, *I* would have adopted the course I intend to adopt: I go further; I am prepared to add, in the very words, though with a different construction, of my right honourable friend's letter, that mine *is* a premeditated sacrifice of public duty to private feelings; for all my private feelings of devotion, gratitude, and attachment to my royal

master, would lead me to endure any thing rather than thwart his pleasure, except that which my conscience tells me would be injurious to the best interests of his crown and dignity."

His voice faltered, and the tears came into his eyes, as he pronounced this eulogium on his loyalty.

"I must frankly confess," said the Earl of Placeankeepit, "that I should *not* do singly what I am going to do; for were I not fortified in it by the example of your Grace, and that of my noble friend, as well as of my other noble and right honourable friends, I should not have sufficient confidence in myself, to be satisfied I was doing right. However, I perfectly agree with Oxford, that it is imperative upon us to prevent the opinion being entertained that we *are* acting from concerted motives."

"Quite so—quite so," observed the Duke; "but now what is it we resolve to do?"

"It is told in one word," replied Lord Delonne—"RESIGN!"

They were all silent. It was a bold, a de-

cisive step; but it was the step upon which they were all agreed, before the moment for taking it had arrived. Yet, when it was thus briefly, thus emphatically propounded by Lord Delonne, it seemed like the unexpected annunciation of a portentous design.

"It needs no deliberation," said the Duke of Strathsay, sitting down at a table where there were pen, ink, and paper. "Let Mr. Cranstoun have the full benefit of his intrigues, and re-construct his motley cabinet as best as he may."

"The country will be taken by surprise," observed the Earl of Placeankeepit thoughtfully, addressing Lord Delonne.

"In my conscience," replied his Lordship, "I believe it will be a cause of joy to nine-tenths of the sound part of the country."

"Cranstoun will cut his throat!" whispered the profound Viscount Crowther, while his ferret eyes twinkled with a laugh which spread over his unmeaning face.

"I dare say," replied his brother-in-law, Sir Canterbury St. John, (to whom the whisper was addressed) with his heavy scowl: "that

seems, of late, to be the approved exit of great men, since Whitbread and Romilly set the example."

The facetiousness of this pair of drolls was carried on apart, in a tone of voice not sufficiently audible to awaken the disgust which such heartless and flippant mirth would have produced.

When the Duke of Strathsay had finished his letter, which, like all his performances in the way of penmanship, was a marvellously confused and commonplace effusion, he read it to the rest. It was approved by all, except Lord Delonne, who suggested several alterations, in order to get rid of those passages that did not *easily admit of a double interpretation.* These alterations were so obviously judicious, that they were at once adopted; and then, *mutatis mutandis*, the epistle served as the basis for the others.

But though thus concocted in concert, and written in common, they were despatched to Cranstoun at irregular intervals, through the day, who could hardly forbear smiling, indignant as he was, at the clumsy subterfuge. His

sagacious mind, even had he been less accurately informed of all the movements of the cabal, would have detected instantly, from internal evidence, that they were all moulded after one original.

It was nearly midnight before he received the reply of Sydney Oxford to his merely official communication; and as he was apprised of his absence from the meeting of the morning at Strathsay House, he concluded the tenor of his letter would correspond with that circumstance. It ran thus; and was marked "Private and Confidential."

"My dear Cranstoun,

"I would not allow myself to answer, hastily, your official communication of this morning, announcing that His Majesty had been pleased to lay his commands upon you to proceed to the re-construction of the Cabinet, in consequence of the lamented death of the Earl of Villopoer; and inviting me, in common with my colleagues, 'to assist you in giving effect to His Majesty's wishes.'

"I have bestowed the best consideration in

my power, upon all the circumstances, as well immediate as remote, as well those of a public as those of a personal character, which I conceive to be affected by the actual, and by the prospective, condition of the Ministry; and I trust you are too well convinced of my sentiments towards yourself, to believe that I would willingly interpose any obstacles to the satisfactory adjustment of a matter in which *your* interests and feelings are so deeply concerned. So far from it, there are few sacrifices I would not cheerfully make, if, by so doing, I could reasonably persuade myself I was advancing any object in the success of which I knew you were personally interested. Unnecessary as, I hope, this declaration must be, I feel a pleasure in thus renewing assurances of my entire esteem and attachment.

"It is with great pain I find myself compelled to state, as the result of my most anxious deliberation upon the subject, that I cannot, without prejudice to the King's Government, and violence to my own principles, consent to retain my present office under such arrangements as are necessarily consequent upon the

commands you have received from His Majesty. You will at once, without my entering into more detailed explanations, understand the grounds upon which I have come to this decision; and you will do justice, I trust, to the validity of the distinction I have drawn, between holding office in an administration where the head of that administration is decidedly opposed to a policy which I equally deprecate, and where, as must now be the case, that policy, though not adopted as an admitted principle of the Cabinet, *is* the declared policy of the individual who directs it.

" The cases will immediately occur, with reference to the department I now fill, in which such a state of things could not but be attended with many embarrassing collisions of opinion; and I can even imagine *some*, that would require from me either a tacit surrender of my own strong and rooted opinions, or a decided refusal to become the official instrument of promoting measures in direct opposition to them. The first of these contingencies I could not consent to; the second, I would rather avoid than have to perform.

"I will not affect to conclude that no other office under the Crown would be open to my acceptance, where these peculiar objections would cease to exist. But I am not desirous of changing my position. It is every way more agreeable to my feelings to retire altogether, than to assume the functions of a new department.

"Permit me to repeat, that it is with great pain I have come to this decision; and to add, that though I shall be denied the pleasure of contributing my humble aid, as an executive minister of the Crown, towards the support of your government, there is nothing in the circumstances which impose this duty upon me, to alter any of those personal sentiments of esteem and regard which must always make me desirous of cooperating with you as a member of parliament.

"Dear Cranstoun,

"Ever yours most faithfully,

"SYDNEY OXFORD."

"To the Right Hon. George Cranstoun,"

&c. &c. &c.

Accompanying this " private and confidential" letter, was another, evidently drawn up from the Strathsay model, which contained Oxford's official tender of his resignation. Cranstoun read the former, by the light of the latter; and saw, at once, he had been deceived in supposing his friend would be found, at the decisive moment, " among the ranks of his supporters."

CHAPTER X.

A WEEK had not elapsed, from the time of turning themselves out of office, before the cabal were the most gall-oppressed knot of gentlemen in the King's dominions.

They had overshot their mark. They as little believed that Cranstoun *would* be able to form such a ministry as would be acceptable to the King, as that he could have persuaded the Archbishop of Canterbury to waltz with a figurante at the opera. They expected, too, there would be such a clamour from one end of the country to the other; such consternation and dismay; such symptoms of slender minorities swelling into overgrown majorities, in parliament, that the Sovereign himself would be at their feet, and the throne under their feet. They had pouted and sulked like a spoiled

mistress—gone away in a pet—and expected to be brought back, with kissing and coaxing. But, alas! none of these things happened. Their royal master resented the indignity offered to himself by strengthening the hands of the minister *he* had chosen and *they* had spurned. The country was neither in hysterics nor convulsions. The parliament vindicated the King's choice. And the throne, so far from falling before the incantations of the mighty wizards, did not even shake sufficiently to ruffle the royal plumage of prerogative, that phœnix-like attribute of monarchy.

"Can these things be, and overcome us like a summer cloud!" exclaimed the astonished and mortified malcontents. What was to be done? The loss of office, and with it the sweets of power and patronage, were bad enough; but it was infinitely worse to see how patiently the nation bore the calamity. This was wormwood to them. Swift has compared a minister coming into office, and the same minister going out, to a man approaching the water-side for the purpose of taking a boat, and the same man landing from the boat. In the

former case, all is eager bustle and confusion to wait upon him; in the latter, he is allowed to walk away with no more notice than would be bestowed upon a tinker's cur. The truth of this comparison was exemplified in the fate of the cabal. It did not, indeed, require exemplification; but we are all of us such important fractions of creation, in our own esteem, that we can never apply to ourselves the excellent wisdom we keep in readiness for every one else.

It was not to be endured, however, that the band of illustrious patriots, who had made such a noble sacrifice in the cause of their country, should fall out of memory thus. A besotted, an ungrateful, an apathetic people must be roused into a sense of their loss. The empire must be made to feel that its own salvation depended upon the speedy restoration to the King's councils of those peerless statesmen who had turned their backs upon their King, for his and his subjects' especial good. It must be taught that they, and they alone, were competent to promote its welfare, protect its dignity, and assert its rights.

And how was all this to be done? By means of some of those "vulgar mysteries of state," which we have already unfolded. The PRESS—the mighty, the omnipotent, the omnipresent, the omniscient press—was put into requisition. It is—there *are* exceptions—we *know* them—and, if called upon to do so, can *name* them—but, saving these exceptions,—it is the Swiss of modern times, which, like law and logic, (as an old writer has said,) "may be hired to fight on any side." A mercenary, however, is sometimes a better soldier than a volunteer; for, if he have not the ardour and spirit of daring enterprise which belong to the latter, he has, perhaps, more experience, more steadiness, and less honour to trouble him.

The supple, obsequious press was therefore put into requisition; and creatures who had fawned grossly upon Cranstoun only a month before, spit upon him now, taking hire from the cabal for their filthy work. A chorus of stipendiary voices was heard, all at once, denouncing the man whom, till they had their cue, they had almost deified. In their blind zeal to deserve the wages of their iniquity, they

denied him the possession of those rare qualities which his political adversaries, in the hottest conflicts of party, had never been so besotted as to question. He was no longer a finished orator, or a profound statesman; but had degenerated, as if by magic, into a mere specious debater, and a shallow minister. He was not even a christian,—for *some* there were, base enough to brand him with infidelity!

Nor was it an apostate press alone which begrimed itself with this infamy. A special engine of calumny was set to work; one provided for the occasion, and exclusively employed to sound a flourish of trumpets in honour of the self-martyrs who had abjured all the allurements of office, all the temptations of power, and all the solid benefits of salary, because—what? Because, forsooth, their consciences, their honour, their patriotism, would not allow them to be the King's servants, if Cranstoun was "viceroy over them!!!"—that same Cranstoun *with* whom they had served for years, and *under* whom they were, by nature, placed, as necessarily as inferior minds must always be subordinate to superior ones.

The torrent of abuse, ridicule, falsehood, and malignity, which this confederate crew of pensioners on the purses of the cabal poured forth from day to day, sometimes from their own reservoirs of purchased hostility, and sometimes as the channels only of the blacker passions of their employers, filled with unmeasured disgust every person who was not qualified by a kindred spirit to enjoy the rancorous warfare. But it was not confined to the press. Within the walls of Parliament, it assumed the same debasing qualities. It was not the minister, who was opposed, it was the man, who was reviled, branded, hunted down, by the blood-hounds of faction. His measures were less assailed than his motives; his government less questioned than his character; his political adherents less attacked than his personal friends were persecuted.

Sir George Ardent was among the latter. At Cranstoun's urgent solicitations, and prompted by a chivalrous desire to lend such feeble aid as it was within even his competence to do, he had suffered himself to be drawn from the circle of private life, where hitherto he had passed

the best years of his own, and accept an office under the Crown with a seat in Parliament. He was too wealthy, too independent in mind, too disconnected with political parties and the intrigues of power, to be obnoxious to the specious imputation of having sought power, now, for its own sake; but he found, and writhed beneath the discovery, as might be expected from a man of his sensitive temperament, that, in the shocks of party virulence, it is safer to wear the armour of corruption than of honesty. The one covers you all over, as Sancho Panza says of sleep, "like a cloak;" but the other leaves you vulnerable to shafts which, though they destroy not, lacerate.

He was taunted with his mature fitness for official duties; complimented, sarcastically, upon his devotion to his friend; condoled with, ironically, upon the sacrifice he had made, in exchanging studious ease for the turmoils of public duty; and openly ridiculed, sometimes as the *Man of Feeling*, smarting from wounds which only a person who had been flayed could feel, and at others, as the *preux et hardi chevalier*, the very Bayard of politicians, whose motto

was HONOUR, emblazoned on a milk-white shield, emblematical of his own purity.

Cranstoun, himself, opposed the energies of a consciously superior mind, goaded beyond its strength, almost, by the magnitude of the danger, and exasperated into fierceness by its low malice, to this storm of paltry passions. The mental anxieties, and bodily fatigue, of the station he occupied, are sufficiently exhausting, when no studied difficulties are prepared to heighten them; so exhausting, that only the promptings of honourable ambition, the insatiable lust of dominion, or the cravings of inordinate vanity, could ever induce a man, who knew the nature and value of true happiness, to grasp at the splendid slavery. But tenfold greater were those mental anxieties in Cranstoun's case; for every hour teemed with some fresh annoyance, some impending danger, some newly-discovered intrigue, that divided with his days and nights the harassing toil of his official duties. He would have surmounted all, however, and triumphed proudly over his degenerate enemies, had his physical powers for

the struggle been equal to his moral and intellectual. But, alas! they were not.

His family and friends,—all who loved, admired, and venerated him,—all who felt that the exigencies of the country demanded the presiding wisdom of a master-mind,—all who could feel sorrow at the sad spectacle of a great man tottering to premature decay, saw, with grief, how the shattered frame of Cranstoun was making feebler and feebler efforts to withstand the assaults of disease. In vain, they wished for him that repose which *might*, perhaps, arrest its fatal progress. In vain, some among them implored him to make the sacrifice that *might* preserve his life. He was the only one that could not see he was in peril. He knew he was ill; but he looked forward to the approaching prorogation of Parliament as an interval of comparative ease, which he believed would recruit his declining health. If not, there would then be time to consider whether he would relinquish the prize he had so hardly gained, and lie under the imputation of its having been wrenched from his grasp by a more

powerful rival, or fall beneath the weight of its glory, and breathe his last overshadowed by its laurels.

It is too certain, the mysterious union of that which is mortal in us, with that which is indestructible, produces a fearful sympathy between the two. Is the mind upon the rack? Look at the body, and mark how it answers to the tortured thoughts in every fibre. Is the body languishing with some malady beyond the reach of medicine to assuage? Look at the mind—ay, even at the mind, that emanation from the Deity himself, that unseen, that undiscoverable something which we know is, but know not what—and note how it is fretted by the humours that gall its tenement of dust. It was even so with Cranstoun. Sickness and pain, corporeal debility, unquiet nights, and days of restless languor, had unstrung the nobler portion of himself, and left him at the mercy of his enemies, by superinducing a diseased sensibility to the virulence of their attacks. He felt them the more acutely, because they struck at a mind already irritated by its fellowship with an enervated body; as a limb already wounded or

broken, quivers at the slightest touch. Every blow, therefore, worked its mischief with redoubled certainty.

"I cannot," said Cranstoun to his friend Sir George Ardent, as he was one evening walking home with him from the House of Commons, the last time it was ever graced by his presence —"I cannot," said he, "fathom the motives of this unrelenting persecution. I have lived long enough to know, for I have witnessed it, that party-rage, in its most excited state, is a species of insanity, impelling men to words and actions which only a present madness could inspire; and I have treated it accordingly. But here, are former friends leagued in a conspiracy, not merely against myself, but against the throne; and assuming an attitude of insolent dictation to the Crown, such as has had no parallel in modern times. An obnoxious minister is the fair object of political combinations for his downfal; and if I were made to feel that I am such a minister, I should look for such combinations. But it is not so. The country is with me, as much perhaps as it can ever be with any minister; of parliament, too,

I may say the same; and yet, because *I*—George Cranstoun—*am* the minister, there is no perfidy, no malice, no insult, no baseness, no weapon of hostility so unmanly, that is not employed by those who were my associates, and by their vindictive followers, to crush me!"

"My dear Cranstoun," replied Sir George, "I have perhaps had better opportunities of reading man, aloof from the crowd, than you, who have always been one of the crowd. We are—(by nature, I am afraid, but, at any rate, impelled to it by the example of the many,)—willing to forgive anything but superiority. The eagle only can look upon the sun with an undazzled eye,—and minds, whose mental vision is of a kindred quality, can alone survey, without pain, the brightness of intellectual light in whose blaze their own burns pale and dim."

"If I could accept the compliment," answered Cranstoun, "I should be compelled to reject the hypothesis as a solution of the enigma."

"Well, then," rejoined Sir George, "I will take a meaner ground. Twelve, or twelve hun-

dred men—(for the principle is the same in one as in all)—are hungry. The thirteenth secures the meal that would feed them. Has he any right to expect he should be allowed to feast himself, without an incessant struggle, a perpetual vigilance, to keep off those who are as hungry as himself?"

"But there are other tables covered—other viands, within their reach," said Cranstoun.

"Granted," answered Sir George;—"but when the eye caters for the stomach, it is not what we can, but what we wish, that is food for the latter. Your epicure is dainty; and though he may be compelled to satisfy nature with humble fare, he resents the better fortune of him who can pamper her with luxuries. I will drop the metaphor, and speak plainly. You are in the place that others want, and not only want, but believe they deserve better than yourself."

"This can apply only to a few," observed Cranstoun. "There are and must be many of those who are now arrayed against me, to whom, if it lay within their reach, it would be injustice to suppose they would have the arrogance to

stretch forth their hands. Why, then, should they be so implacable?"

"Why are *your* friends so stedfast?" replied Sir George. "Because they love, or respect, or fear you. From your own firmness, they borrow theirs;—from your own example, they catch the tone of their fidelity to you. Believe me, were *you* capable of employing the means you reprobate, you would not be long before you found appropriate instruments for doing so. What follows?—The Duke of Strathsay, Sydney Oxford, Lord Delonne, and the rest, have *their* friends as stedfast to them as yours are to you; and, like the latter, they adapt their services to the known wants and inclinations of those they support. The impulse is received from *them;* but, instead of running itself clearer as it advances, it corrupts itself with the foulness of the channels through which it passes. There is, in this world, a base, as well as a noble, excess of zeal."

"There is!" exclaimed Cranstoun with a sigh, "and I am its victim!"

CHAPTER XI.

It was about this period that Cranstoun's attention was directed by his private Secretary, Frederick Ardent, to a series of letters, signed "An Etonian," which appeared in one of the public papers. They were written in defence of his administration; but, independently of the consummate talent they displayed, there was a tone of warm and zealous feeling in them, which clearly indicated that the writer was influenced by sentiments beyond what could be inspired merely by political considerations. His first suspicion was, that they emanated from the pen of Sir George, and he taxed him with being the author; but his positive denial put an end to that supposition. He then directed inquiries to be made of the editor of the paper in which the letters were publishing,

without, however, succeeding in his object. Either the writer's name was really unknown to the editor, or, which is more likely, it became a secret and a mystery; from the moment it appeared curiosity was keen enough to make secrecy and mystery a whetstone for sharpening it still further.

But, strange to say, though nobody could tell who the author was, the author himself was quickly apprised of the efforts which had been made to discover him; for, in something less than a week after their commencement, Cranstoun, to his great surprise, received the following letter: —

"July 10th, 18—.

"SIR,

"THREE years ago, your carriage broke down as you were returning to London from Deddington Park, the seat of Sir George Ardent. You rested, while the accident was repaired, at an humble road-side public house. If you remember this circumstance, you will perhaps remember also a stranger who was in the room you entered, and who, ignorant *then*

of the distinguished person with whom he was conversing, spoke of his Eton days, and of the great men, as they afterwards turned out, who were his schoolfellows. That stranger is the writer of the letters signed 'An Etonian,' which have obtained the honour of being thought worthy of your notice, in a way peculiarly flattering to their author, who seizes this opportunity of subscribing himself, Sir,

"Your enthusiastic admirer,

"And most obedient servant,

"GEOFFREY CRABBE."

"The Right Hon. George Cranstoun,"

&c. &c. &c.

Cranstoun handed over this letter to Frederick, who refreshed his memory upon some of the incidents connected with the event to which it referred. At a subsequent period, Cranstoun made further inquiries respecting Geoffrey Crabbe—learned that he was a poor curate with nine children and a sick wife—and gratified his amiable disposition by bestowing upon him a living of three hundred a-year.

This was almost the last act of patronage, if such it might be called, which he performed as

Prime Minister—for, alas! his days were numbered. The war of former friends, cooperating with a fierce malady, hunted him to his grave. The interval of a few days sufficed to lay him on his death-bed, and to stretch him there a corpse! But it was not till about twenty-four hours before he expired, that he really believed he had done with this world. Up to that moment, he relied upon the strength of his constitution; and when, at length, he prepared to die, the first words he uttered were — (in a whisper to his young friend, Frederick, who was supporting him, while he endeavoured to change his position,) — "The King!—I am sorry for my royal master!"

There was a meaning in these words, which after-events disclosed; for Cranstoun well knew his death would be the sure forerunner of those events. All men speak prophetically in their dying hour; but it needed not this awful inspiration, when the future mysteriously dawns upon us as the present vanishes from our soul, to enable him, instructed as he was of the elements that *must* come into play when he has gone, to predict consequences with regard to

the monarch, from which he had *once* saved him.

Westminster Abbey received his ashes. There they were entombed, amid the illustrious of former ages; there, in that proud receptacle of the mighty dead, that huge quarry of thickly gathered graves, where every clod of earth is part of some noble creature who once shed glory upon the race of man, the stonecutter's art furnished the only monumental inscription to the memory of George Cranstoun! Foreign nations deplored his loss as a common bereavement. In his own country, it was felt that the last of her great men had departed. His family and friends found some consolation in the general grief, which was as a homage that sanctified their own, by the testimony it bore to the exalted qualities and eminent virtues of the husband, father, friend, master, whom *they* bewailed.

The death of Cranstoun was viewed as no public calamity, by the Strathsay party, or its rancorous adherents. It was their morning-star of brighter hopes and coming sunshine, emerging suddenly from clouds that had given

no promise of returning serenity. Right well they knew, the discordant elements of the Cabinet which they had driven their victim to assemble, could not hold together long, now that the powerful mind was withdrawn by whose vigorous influence harmony and compactness, sufficient at least for all practical purposes, had been communicated to it. But having accomplished their great object, accomplished it, too, in a way beyond their expectations, if not their design; seeing Cranstoun removed from between themselves and their ambition, from between themselves and power, patronage, and profit—removed for ever—and no single individual, in the political arena, capable of stepping forward to stand where he stood;—having, we say, accomplished this object, and seeing themselves thus secure, they craftily kept aloof from the scene that would soon be cleared for their reappearance. Eager as blood-hounds in the chase, they were as patient as spaniels, in their well-feigned moderation, when the spoil was to be distributed. They made no advances, insinuated no pretensions, proffered no patriotic services. Oh no! They were satisfied with

what they had done! They had cut away the main foundations of the edifice, and abstained from pulling down what they were aware would tumble down of itself. Their dignified forbearance was quite edifying.

And tumble down it did, as all men foresaw, and most men wished; for, Cranstoun gone—it was a living body changed to a dead carcass. A desperate effort, however, was made to avert the final catastrophe. A respectable, well-behaved journeyman-statesman, who knew all he had learned, but had learned nothing that was worth knowing, undertook to carry on the business as head of the firm. This was Lord FREDERICK UXOR, the best of husbands; for he never allowed his duties to his wife to be encroached upon by the duties of the State. If Lady Uxor had a head-ache, and a foreign ambassador was waiting for an interview, the ambassador waited till the wife had received her hartshorn drops from the hand of her affectionate spouse. If a cabinet council were summoned by his Lordship, and his Lordship, meanwhile, were summoned by her Ladyship, to air her bedgown, the tender and diligent husband

obeyed the second call, while his colleagues were obeying the first.

He was the best of friends too. He could deny nothing to those who asked; and the consequence was, he had nothing to grant, except his ever-ready promise to give what was wanted. Among all the things he had learned, he had never acquired the art of *saying*—no. But the want of this art necessarily compelled him to *act* no; for, as has been wisely observed, if two men ride on horseback, one must ride behind;—so, if every man gets the promise of that which only one man can receive, the remainder have the benefit of discovering that yes does not always mean precisely the same thing as possession. Moreover, when A. says "I'll do it," and forgets that B. C. and D. want to do it also; or when, because he cannot find in his heart to disappoint a friend, he neglects to find in his head reasons for not encroaching upon the prerogative of others, it is hardly possible to avoid those inconveniences which result from interfering with the rights of even the most amiable persons.

But then, Lord Frederick Uxor was so good-

natured, so kind, so gentle, so every thing that we are accustomed to find in good-natured grocers and haberdashers, who are the idols of their acquaintance, that the worst any body said of him was, that he was too soft and simple for a Minister. With this exception, he had the favourable word of all persons; perhaps, because all persons had the favourable word of his Lordship. Be this as it may, one thing is certain; he managed the affairs of the nation with as much wisdom as it had pleased Heaven to give him, and attended to business with as much diligence as was compatible with the paramount business he had to despatch for his wife. It was frequently his practice, after sitting up till three or four in the morning, trying to get her Ladyship to sleep, (when she had one of her "nervous nights,") by administering copious opiates from the Minerva Press, to devote the remainder of the night to doing what her Ladyship's "nervous days" had compelled him to leave undone.

The rest of the Cabinet, wiser than the frogs of old, were perfectly satisfied with their king

Log. He served to keep them together; and while they kept together, they kept their places. Every member of it, indeed, felt his own superiority; but there was a proud humility in consenting to serve under Lord Frederick Uxor, which was both patriotic and convenient. They would not hazard the consequences of protesting against the arrangement, because it *might* endanger the interests of the country, and was certain to endanger their own. So they grovelled on, from quarter-day to quarter-day; and his Lordship, as was very natural, began to suspect that any man was fit for the place of prime minister, who could get it.

It happened, however, that Lord Frederick Uxor was not the only person who entertained this notion; at least, there was one who entertained the notion, that he was fit for any place *he* could get. This was Charles James Sherris, the son of a banker, and for many years distinguished as a highly useful treasury-clerk. Diligence, punctuality, and a thorough knowledge of arithmetic, were his stepping-stones to the higher functions of a Secretary of the Treasury, in which office he exhibited a rare instance

of what can be done with money by those who understand its fructifying qualities. The ingenious fellow, in the old song, who spent "half-a-crown, out of sixpence a-day," was the humble prototype of Charles James Sherris, who amassed thousands out of hundreds, in a few years. Every body knew the fact, but nobody knew the secret; yet a secret there must have been, because Mr. Sherris, according to all vulgar notions of the capabilities of a pound sterling, seemed to expend annually, quite as much as he received annually, estimating his receipts *by* his receipts, for his salary. But what then? A prudent man makes one shilling do the duty that an imprudent man employs five to perform. Besides, are there no such things as windfalls? May not legacies, valuable gifts, or lottery tickets, before lotteries were abolished, account as satisfactorily for unaccountable wealth, as the frequent visits, and intimate friendship, of a city Crœsus?

A mouse, as ancient chronicles relate, once set a lion free from the toils of the hunter; and Mr. Sherris was the mouse who released Lord Frederick Uxor from the toils of the state.

There was a vacant office to which was attached a seat in the cabinet. Mr. Sherris aspired to it. Lord Uxor could not say no. But it was an appointment which did not come within the range of his exclusive disposal. His colleagues were entitled to be consulted. Lord Uxor forgot this, in his amiable haste to say yes, to Mr. Sherris. The torch of discord thus kindled, was allowed to burn the more fiercely, because, by this time, the conviction was pretty general among them, that putting it out could not prevent their going out themselves. However, it would look more magnanimous to seem to withdraw in disgust, at the violation of a recognised principle; so the torch was suffered to blaze away, until it dissolved the rotten cement by which they were so feebly held together.

Poor Lord Uxor! He was in a melancholy pucker for eight-and-forty hours. It was shilly-shally at first, but nilly-willy at last. He *would* resign—and then he wouldn't; he *did* resign—and then he didn't; he said he *had* resigned; and then he said he had not. In his extremity, he consulted his wife. "Resign, my dear," said

her Ladyship, "for I miss you very much when I am ill; and you know I am never well. I want a nurse constantly with me." This decided him. Two hours afterwards, he set off for Windsor, and came back an ex-premier.

CHAPTER XII.

"We have played our cards well," exclaimed Sydney Oxford, in the first meeting of the cabal at Strathsay House, after the Duke of Strathsay had been convinced by his friends there was nothing *insane* in his Grace following the example of Lord Uxor. And it was this example which, doubtless, weighed most in satisfying the Duke of Strathsay that his self-denying declaration on a former occasion might be annulled; for it could be no evidence of over-weening presumption to measure capacities with Lord Uxor.

"Thank God, we have won the game too!" observed the prudent Earl of Placeankeepit, whom nine unsalaried months had reduced to a state of sincere contrition for his offence.

"There was a time when I was piously resigned to its loss—"

"And began to repent you of having resigned," interrupted that Solon of hereditary legislators, Viscount Crowther.

"Did I not well advise you of the issue?" said the venerable Earl Delonne, who, though he declined resuming his own station, when his colleagues were reinstated, was still the oracle of the cabal, and the secret prompter of their earlier measures. "I have lived long enough to know what ricketty alliances must ever grow out of discordant coalitions. Cranstoun is in his grave; and the world says, we helped to send him there. I did not love the man when living, but his memory is sacred with me, now that he is no more. And, Heaven knows, though I loved him not, I should not go in peace to my own grave, if my heart told me I deserved the accusation of having contributed towards hastening his death."

Lord Delonne wept. The Duke of Strathsay laughed. Sydney Oxford and the Earl of Placeankeepit smiled contemptuously. The rest shrugged their shoulders and exchanged silent

looks, which spoke their thoughts. An old man's tears *should* find sympathy in every bosom; but when, like his Lordship, a man has grown old, in crying upon some half dozen prescribed subjects, he must expect to share the fate of a common crier in a country town.

"They who have raised the clamour," observed Sydney Oxford, "do not themselves believe the accusation; but if they did, I, for one, should only despise the vulgar calumny. Men die when it is their time, because it is, and by preordained means; I venture to doubt, however, whether, among those preordained means, we could find such a case as a minister newspaper-killed. Nevertheless, I am free to confess, it is a malady that would be very fatal, if it could once be received into the catalogue of mortal diseases."

"What would they have said," remarked the Earl of Placeankeepit, "if Cranstoun had failed in the great object of his ambition, and still have died, as die I presume he would, at his fore-doomed hour?"

"Why, that we killed him by preventing him from being minister," replied the Duke of

Strathsay abruptly. "But have we no better things to talk about?"

The question was a command. The subject dropped; and the conversation took its current from the new Premier.

Sydney Oxford was right. They *had* "played their cards well;" and there was reason in the pious thanksgiving of the Earl of Placeankeepit for having "won the game." But they had still most difficult cards to play, and a most hazardous game yet to win.

The Duke of Strathsay was now Prime Minister; the prime minister of a mighty empire, whose colossal power rested mainly upon the foundations of trade, manufactures, commerce, and credit. Subtle and complicated matters, these; and not usually comprehended in the studies that fit men to become good soldiers, or forming part of the practical knowledge acquired in camps. But there was one lesson which his Grace had not learned in his past career; and it was almost pardonable in him, therefore, that he believed he was beyond its influence.

Defeat had never waited upon his resolves.

Then why should it now? Omnipotent in the field, what was there to teach him timidity in the cabinet? Success begets confidence. Confidence, long sustained by unvarying success, inspires the moral delirium of infallibility. Men, at whom the world wonders, are most prone to wonder at themselves; for *they* know by what miraculous chances they have been placed on the pinnacle of their greatness, and how vast a debt they owe to fortune. Such men, however, are equally prone, in the end, to doubt the thing they once knew; to fling aside their secret humility, and, converting what was chance and fortune into will and certainty, rush upon the future with the assurance that it must be a counterpart of the past. Hence the melancholy reverses of human grandeur, which serve to "point a moral or adorn a tale."

The Duke of Strathsay yielded to this self-delusion, and acted in the spirit of it. The Treasury was his head-quarters; the members of the Cabinet, his staff; Parliament his army; the political arena of Europe, his field of battle; and a great domestic question, the victory with which he determined to signalize the opening

of his ministerial campaign. All those great qualities of mind which were virtues of the highest order in the unconquered leader of mighty hosts, became errors of the most pernicious character in the tyro minister. His will was substituted for deliberation; resolution, for prudence; promptitude, for inquiry; decision, for caution. He ordered the carrying of a legislative or cabinet measure, as he would have ordered the carrying of a redoubt. He exacted from reasoning agents the unreasoning obedience of a brigade of dragoons. Accustomed to rely upon himself, where all were subordinate to himself, and where there was no division of responsibility, he could not comprehend the necessity for merging the singleness of his own views in those of persons who were appointed equally with himself to give the country the benefit of their wisdom. It was a dictatorship, rather than a government composed of the Sovereign and his ministers. It was what the Duke of Strathsay chose to do, or did not choose to do, rather than what the ministry determined upon doing or not doing.

This might have been all very well, and

might probably have worked well enough in practice, had his Grace been as consummate a statesman as he was a general. But his most devoted friends were compelled to give him the benefit of his duplex character; to separate the soldier from the civilian; and to qualify their reluctant confessions of his incompetency as a minister, by recording their unbounded admiration of him as a hero.

It was indeed lamentable, pitiable in the extreme, to see the nakedness of mind he exhibited whenever he rose in Parliament to propound, defend, or explain, the intentions of Government. He was wholly incapable of comprehensive and connected reasoning; equally so of leading, by a series of facts, to the conclusions he wished to establish. Instead of facts or arguments, he gave his hearers bald assertions, couched in a phraseology no less bald. All he knew was, what he intended to perform, or had already performed; and all his oratory consisted in telling what he knew with a sort of dogged pertinacity of purpose. His most vigilant antagonists were never able to track him to his conclusions, by the faintest footmarks

of the steps by which he had arrived at them himself.

Such was the Duke of Strathsay, in the preposterous position to which an inordinate ambition had conducted him; and the Parliament and the country felt indignant at the undisguised arrogance of his self-assumptions. This indignation was heightened by the manner in which important offices, demanding, for their efficient discharge, a minute and life-long acquaintance with commercial affairs, or a profound knowledge of abstruse theories, were consigned to Generals, Major-Generals, and Quarter-Master Generals. The sword, the plume, and the sash, were passports to functions which, till then, had been cautiously entrusted to men who had studied in a far different school. It was at once ludicrous and melancholy to observe the grave audacity with which these appointments were vindicated, and the solemn effrontery with which the discovery was promulgated, that a man might learn the science of civil government while diligently discharging garrison duties, or performing the arduous services of a campaign. But what

then? It was his Grace's will; and they who had flattered him into the acceptance of power were not so squeamish as to question his exercise of it. Like honest Moses, in the play, they were ready to swear to whatever his Grace referred to their honour.

Among the subservient crew of worshippers was Sydney Oxford,—and he had his reward. We have said, that a "great domestic question was the victory with which the Duke of Strathsay determined to signalize the opening of his ministerial campaign." This question was no other than the identical one which Oxford, in his conversation with Cranstoun and the Earl of Villopoer, (recorded in the opening of this work,) declared was of such overwhelming danger, in his estimation, that it was *impossible* there should ever be "a time, or circumstances, or persons, when, or under which, or in deference to whom, he could lay his hand upon his heart, and, as an honest man, as a responsible minister of the Crown, as a conscientious legislator, give his consent to the carrying of it." It was the identical question with regard to which he pro-

fessed his determination "to take his station as a private individual, and do his best, in that capacity, to avert the calamity from his country," rather than remain in office, and be even a dissenting party to its triumph. It was the identical question which, he said, would compel him, if ever it became a cabinet measure, to merge "all personal considerations, all individual attachments, all individual feelings, in his sense of public duty." Lastly, it was the identical question which, at a later period, he assigned as the ONLY reason which prevented him from retaining the office he held, or accepting any other, under Cranstoun.

Was it then in scorn of the duplicity he *knew* had been employed, or was it to punish that duplicity with degradation and infamy beyond all conception galling and most bitter,—or was it simply in the haughtiness of paramount authority, that the Duke of Strathsay commanded Oxford to be, HIMSELF, the proposer, advocate, and asserter of this very question—that he singled *him* out, among all his colleagues, to bring it forward as a cabinet mea-

sure, and to vindicate its justice, its expediency, its necessity, its healing and beneficent properties?

The exact motives may never be known, perhaps; but the brand of apostasy was indelibly stamped upon the brow of Oxford. Why the cup of humiliation was prepared for him may remain a secret, peradventure, till the generation has passed away before whom the scene was acted; but that he drained the cup to the dregs, swallowed the filthy lees to the last drop, in the assembled presence of a British House of Commons, is a recorded fact, an enduring and imperishable stain in the annals of public principles. Shade of Cranstoun! thy triumph was complete! The betrayer of his country was worthy to be *thy* enemy.

CHAPTER XIII.

SIR GEORGE ARDENT had scarcely recovered from the shock his feelings sustained by the death of Cranstoun, his chosen friend in the morning of life when there is no base alloy in the heart's impulses, and his proudly honoured friend in after years when reason completed what the sympathies of kindred natures had begun—scarcely had his mind regained somewhat of its former composure, ere a deeper and more agonising anxiety began to fasten upon it.

General Asper continued implacable, "nursing his wrath," like Tom O'Shanter's wife, "to keep it warm." And he kept it more than warm; it was at a boiling heat. The Colonel, still in Ireland, had honourably fulfilled the promise he gave to Sir George, restricting himself to communications with Sir George only, and

Charles. With the General he had not corresponded for several months; as the last letter he wrote, imploring him to rescind his fatal resolution, remained unanswered. From Caroline, and from Caroline chiefly, he received tidings of Louisa; and of late, these tidings had assumed a fearful character; for they told the sad story of an uncomplaining spirit passing away from the anguish it could bear no longer.

Louisa had bowed in silence to the mandate of her father, while the silence she enjoined had never once been violated. No tongue spoke of Colonel Asper in *her* presence; and she strove to repay this fidelity, in the presence of Sir George and Lady Ardent, by a studied tranquillity of manner which might have deceived the mind, if the eye had not read a far different tale in her countenance. She would talk as usual; she would sometimes smile as cheerfully as usual; she seemed to occupy herself with reading, music, and drawing, as usual; but did she *look* as once she looked? Ah, no! A pale and wasting cheek,—eyes whose lustre had fled,—a voice whose tones breathed ever in the cadence which melancholy and sorrow impart,—

sighs that answered to secret thoughts, and sudden tears that were the companions of those sighs, which showed themselves for a moment, to be rebuked by a forced yet languid gaiety that only revealed more plainly the thing it was meant officiously to hide,—these were denotements of the strife within, over which no saint-like meekness, no patient resignation, could fling a veil. They were, in fact, the work of that very meekness and resignation.

Many an anxious and foreboding conversation took place between Sir George and Lady Ardent, upon the alarming condition of their beloved child. The latter, with all a mother's natural dismay at what she considered an impending calamity, would fain have averted it by setting at nought feelings which she deemed too scrupulously refined, when the price for their indulgence was so terrific. But she hesitated to avow as much to her husband, who, like herself, saw the miserable consequences of the course to which he had been driven, hanging over him; dreaded them as keenly; and would have arrested their progress, by any sacrifice almost, short of the only one that

could arrest them; but, unlike her Ladyship in this, that he viewed the evil as one of those curses which flow from the corrupt passions of man in society.

"Is it not monstrous," he exclaimed, on one occasion, when Lady Ardent had obscurely hinted at her own wishes—"is it not monstrous, that I must stand by and see a choleric fool drag down my child to her grave—that a waspish, petulant idiot shall have the privilege to bring desolation into my dwelling, by robbing it of its most precious treasure? For to this it comes. I am denied the best authority of a father, that which provides for the happiness of his offspring, by a moody churl, who has power to stand between me and my desires."

"It is a power which you give him yourself, my love," replied Lady Ardent.

"No—" said Sir George—"it is a power he usurps over me, aided by the tyranny of a vile world!"

"And is it worth while," rejoined her Ladyship, "to bow before such a tyranny, when we can escape from it so easily?"

"Whither?" exclaimed Sir George. "To what other world, to what region of honesty and honour, of virtue and goodness, can we fly? It is but an exchange of despots, fleeing from what is bad to what cannot be better, and may be worse."

"Surely not, to one like you; who have never bent in homage before this bad world, but always looked into yourself alone when you sought a reason to satisfy you your will was just, and always found the thing you sought."

"I look into myself now," replied Sir George, "and find that reason for what I *have* done. I cannot brook to lay my nature prostrate and grovelling at the foot of any created being. I will not be the slave of follies I despise, nor the pander to my own dishonour."

"Then do I fear the worst!" exclaimed Lady Ardent, bursting into tears.

This exclamation fell upon the spirit of Sir George like a dismal prophecy of inevitable woe. The colour fled from his cheek, his lip quivered, and his voice was agitated as he tenderly clasped his wife's hand.

"Nay, let not your anxiety for our dear child," said he, "take this ominous shape. Heaven knows where I should find fortitude to sustain the visitation, were it the will of God I should be put to so severe a trial! I fear, not all the love I have for you, Maria, nor that which kindles at the thought of Charles and Frederick, would be sufficient to ward off the blow. I seem to feel, too surely, our heart-strings are so twined together, that what dissevers one, must destroy both."

"When you talk thus," replied Lady Ardent, "you only darken, with terrible gloom, the miserable future that is already too appalling. Why will you not stop, while there is yet perhaps time to do so, in a path that threatens us with such disastrous consequences?"

"Because I can sooner abide any afflictions I may be doomed to bear, than doom myself to what would be the sharpest of all,—a degrading consciousness of having forfeited every claim to self-respect. But, my curses upon him who drives me to the choice!"

It was thus that Sir George clung to the sophistry which paves the way to misery. Ge-

neral Asper wanted the intellectual power to refine with equal dexterity upon *his* motives; but they claimed no higher origin. *He* substituted his naked will for subtle causes; while Sir George clothed his with nice distinctions. This was the only difference. Practically, they acted alike; for they both determined to maintain the attitude they had assumed.

Lady Ardent deplored the circumstance with unavailing regrets. For the first time in her life, she almost condemned the conduct of her husband, because, for the first time, that conduct had made the mother plead against the wife. Nay, after what Sir George had said, and, as she firmly believed, most truly said, the wife and mother were concerned in one common cause. Her fears were equally roused for the child drooping to decay, and for the father whose life was so much a part of his child's, that they could not wither singly.

Charles, too, would fain have become a zealous advocate for his sister, but that he knew *his* interposition would have been ascribed to interested feelings. The imputation would have been unjust, however; for though he

anxiously wished the interdiction removed on his own account, and longed, now that he was once more restored to his father's affections, to complete his happiness by his union with Caroline, yet his love for Louisa was such, and such his regard for his friend's welfare, he would willingly have consented to the condition that their felicity should be the postponement of his own, if that sacrifice could have purchased it.

Nor would Caroline have dissented from such a condition. She had achieved so much in *not* becoming the wife of Mr. Spencer, that she hardly felt the calamity of being forbidden to think of Charles, softened as it was by knowing that his family approved his choice, and believing as she did, that the time must soon come when her father would relax from the severity of his purpose.

But none of these consolations descended upon the troubled spirit of Louisa. She was alone in her grief, as she was alone in the depth and intensity of her love. Her's was no heart,—her's was no character, to wanton with a passion which, when it lays hold of such

a heart and character, can never dally with its hopes. From the moment it was kindled, it became the life-blood of her very being; and whatever stopped its current, wasted the life it fed

Nor was this all. Her love for him that should have been her husband, had reared itself as an indestructible mound between her and her father. She could no longer return to him; she could no longer find in him that all-satisfying, that all-sufficient object, which had before filled up every wish of her soul. Did she still love him? Yes! Even to the point that she would not trust herself to question the perfect justice of the command she so entirely obeyed. But she found it impossible to bring back feelings which till now had held an undisputed mastery over every other.

Her situation was the more pitiable, because, true to the nurture she had received, true to those qualities by which nature had prepared her to receive that nurture, she shared with her father all the high-wrought sentiments of which they were both the victims. No Eastern widow ever ascended the funeral pile with a more sted-

fast faith in the just necessity of her appalling sacrifice, than that which sustained Louisa in her submission to the one she was herself making. The extraordinary extent of this moral enthusiasm, was frequently displayed in her conversations with Sir George, and was eloquently enforced in the following letter to Caroline :—

"My dear Caroline,

"If I did not know the purity of your heart, I should be offended with the sentiments it inspires; and if I did not know my own heart, my own sentiments, I should ask myself—What have I said or done, that I am supposed capable of doing what you seem to lament is not done?

"I cannot tell how others love. I only know how *I* love. Were your brother the neediest wretch that Poverty ever laid her lean hand upon, I would go with him to the altar, return with him to beggary, and be happy, in all things save where he was not, so that I did no violence to feelings which are dearer to me than life itself, inasmuch as life would be worth-

less when they were gone. But, were your brother the envy of the world for all that the world worships,—riches, honour, power, and every rare perfection of mind and body, I would *not* be his upon contrivance! I abhor the indignity involved in the supposition.

"This is *my* love, Caroline. A very foolish love, perchance, for it gives to *others* the prerogative of throwing open to me the gates of happiness. And yet, if I were at war with myself, what real or lasting happiness could I find any where?

"I have read of love—lawless as the winds—fierce as southern tempests, which scorned all hindrances, and rushed along its course like the blast of the desert. But while I read, I have asked myself—*Is* this love? It bore too strong a semblance to passion—to something less exalted, less ethereal, less noble in its origin and end, to let me answer—Yes!

"I am very, very proud, my dear Caroline. I could not stoop to take the thing I knew was mine, if there were one who, in the exercise of a fancied right, forbade it. I would not deign to dispute that right by showing my

own, any more than I could brook to urge a claim which it were insolence to question. To admit the necessity of doing so, by yielding to it, is a tacit confession there are those who think you capable of a dishonourable pretension which you are courteous enough to disprove for their satisfaction.

"With these feelings, which are a part of my very nature, (for they are its spontaneous growth) what remains, but that I should bow to what has happened? Your father spurns me! He spurns MY father! He denies, scornfully denies, that our bloods should mingle. Do I condemn him, therefore? No. But can I CRAWL into his veins? Never! never!

"It were as useless as sad to dwell upon the scene that once lay smiling before me. It can smile, for *me*, no more! Believe it, Caroline! The darkness that has descended upon it, will not give way to the former sunny brightness, for *me*. I cannot so mistake the silent warnings of my breaking heart, as to cherish the illusion. No, no! The worm has entered it, that is death's sure messenger. And trust me,

my dear Carcline, I have more sorrow at this moment for those who will shed tears upon my grave, than for myself, who am going to it: —for my incomparable father — my beloved mother — Charles, and —— Oh, God! there is too much anguish in that thought!

"Adieu! The tears that blot out what I write, bid me write no more. Adieu, my dear Caroline!

"L. ARDENT."

CHAPTER XIV.

We should not go in peace to our grave, were we to bring this great work to a conclusion without recording in it one more of the many celebrated sittings of The Muses. But, alas! Death had been busy even in that small circle of life; in its brief space of existence. Reginald Danby, the Vice-President, whose attenuated form, instead of giving "to the world the assurance of a man," gave it only a shadow of humanity, had evaporated! It could hardly be said he died; he disappeared one morning—ceased to breathe—went quite out, after having been for many years hovering on the earth like a wreath of fine vapour. He was a native of Ayr, in Scotland; and thither what was left of him was sent for interment, enclosed in a leaden coffin, lest the learned in those weighty matters

should have suspected, from the lightness of their load, either that Death had been falsely accused, or the tomb defrauded of its inhabitant.

His successor among THE MUSES was the Rev. Martin Fulk, in all corporeal qualities the very antipodes of Reginald Danby, — short, squab, and pursy. He did not succeed to the official functions of his predecessor, that dignity being unanimously conferred upon Claridge; but he filled up the vacancy that had occurred.

The Rev. Martin Fulk was the writer of one work which he never published, and the publisher of many that he never wrote. The history of the former was curious and entertaining. We shall therefore give it.

He was not an author by profession; that is, he was not the drudge of booksellers; neither was he a sensitive candidate for fame. But he wrote a book, nevertheless; and as his industry was not stimulated by necessity, for his means were ample, he took his own time. At the end of thirteen years he finished it; and though it was to invite notice in the unpretending character of a single volume only, it was destined,

he believed, to fix general attention, by the comprehensive nature of its contents. He called it "OMNIUM GATHERUM; OR A LITTLE OF EVERY THING." The title was certainly appropriate; for the book contained the essence, the concentrated extract, as it were, of all his reading upon all subjects.

When he had finished it, he took two years to correct it. When he had corrected it, he took two more to make nine fair copies. One of these was for himself; the other eight for a purpose whose issue will operate, we trust, as a salutary warning to all men who, having pleased themselves, must needs set about pleasing others. For it is worthy of especial note, that there is a wonderful difference between doing a thing well, and then receiving men's voluntary judgments thereon, as they may chance to fall; and *inviting* men to declare their judgment upon the thing that *is* done well, with a view to its being made better.

In the one case, the opinions given are pertinent to, and arise from, their subject; but in the other, they are born of each man's vanity, who considers only how he himself would have

performed that which is already performed. Now, a man shall as easily dress his body in garments which shall fit every one, as clothe his thoughts in apparel that shall seem meet to every one; and yet, it shall be very certain, perhaps, that both his body and his thoughts might be much better attired than they are, though not so certain that he would do wisely in altering either. I admit the truth of the poet's doctrine.

> "No bandit fierce, no tyrant mad with pride,
> No cavern'd hermit rests *self*-satisfied:
> Abstract what *others* feel, what *others* think,
> All pleasures lessen, and all glories sink."

But he who would reap the full harvest of social sympathy must be his own husbandman; plough the soil, sow the seed, and water the growth himself; then look for his reward in the fair market-price of the commodity he has to sell.

The Rev. Martin Fulk having finished his *Omnium Gatherum*, resolved to submit it in MS. to certain of his friends for their revisal. Whether it was timidity, never having written a book before, or a lurking appetite for praise,

hoping to find in their commendations the prologue to what would be said by the world at large, cannot be exactly determined. However, having made nine fair copies, one of which he kept for himself, he distributed the rest as follows:—

He sent one to his very intimate friend NATHANIEL BARNABY, Esq., of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. He knew him to be a profound logician; and *if* (which was not likely, he thought,) there were any unsound reasonings in the book, he would instantly detect them. He despatched another to his intimate friend PETER MALLARD, Esq., Head-master of Rugby School; and *if* (which was not likely, he thought,) in any part of the work he had broken Priscian's head, he knew he was the man to mend it again. A third, he forwarded to his equally intimate friend and quondam fellow-student, MARMADUKE FINCH. He was a first-rate poet, from epics in quarto, down to sonnets, elegies, and epistles in duodecimo; and as there was a chapter upon poetry, besides original effusions of Fulk's own scattered here and there, he could judge equally well of his

didactic and poetical powers, *if* (which was not likely, he thought,) there was any thing amiss in either. To the REV. HENRY MICKLEFIELD, the celebrated historian, and his old friend, he despatched a fourth; for he had an elaborate dissertation upon some disputed points of English history, and *if* he were wrong (which was not likely, he thought,) in his facts, he could set him right.

The fifth he sent to Professor M'FARLANE, of Aberdeen, a gentleman to whom he was very well known, and whose studies lying chiefly in the cultivation of scientific subjects, he would be able to correct any mistakes, *if* any there were, (which was not likely, he thought,) in his chapter upon "Mechanical Powers," in which he treated of the steam engine, the lever, the pulley, the wedge, &c. &c. A sixth copy he left himself with DR. AMBROSE, the minister of the parish where he resided. Dr. Ambrose was deeply versed in the writings of the Fathers, and had the scholastic theology of the middle ages at his fingers' ends. In many a hard tussle which Martin Fulk had had with him, he became convinced there was no man living so com-

petent to appreciate the value of the first chapter of his book, which was an attempt, among other recondite matters, to settle for ever the much-disputed question of former times relating to the exility of angelic bodies.

The Rev. Martin Fulk had undertaken to demonstrate, exactly, how many myriads of angels could dance upon the point of a needle without jostling each other; and Dr. Ambrose was the very man to find out an error in the calculation, *if* there were one, (which was not likely, he thought.) And here, as it is extremely doubtful whether the OMNIUM will ever be published now; and as the discovery—for Fulk always maintained it *was* a discovery—cost him an infinite deal of trouble, besides being in itself of the utmost importance to society, we will briefly state the result of his labours. He took, as the basis of his calculations, the point of an ordinary tailor's needle; and found that 154,326 angels would have room for only half a leg of an additional one. Not satisfied with this, he went to work with a common Whitechapel needle, and ascertained there was a difference between the two descriptions of needles of no

less than 4,236 angels, and a whole leg; the latter presenting a surface capable of receiving comfortably no more than 150,000 angels. The manner in which he worked these calculations would astonish the learned.

But this same first chapter contained many other recondite matters. There was a profound dissertation upon the manner in which the Septuagint translation of the Bible was performed in the island of Pharos by command of Ptolemy, in which he clearly demonstrated, that the "seventy seniors" were confined in separate cells of the tower, and had no communication with each other till they had all completed their respective tasks. He also proved that the Aristæus, whose history of the Septuagint denies the fact of the separate cells, was not *the* Aristæus who lived in the time of Ptolemy, from the circumstance of his mentioning the Heptastadium, which was the work of Cleopatra; and that the *true* Aristæus *did* mention the cells, though Josephus omitted the passage, for reasons which he gave. Further, he convicted St. Jerome of a wilful falsehood, who denies the history of the cells, as *vulgo sine autore jactata*,

because he wished to establish the necessity of his own translation of the Bible from the Hebrew into Latin, which he could not do, without impugning the accuracy of the Septuagint; while the latter could be successfully done only by questioning the received account of the miraculous identity of the translations; which, as St. Austin remarks, in his commentary on the eighty-seventh Psalm, *non immerito propter mirabilem consensum divino Spiritu interpretati esse credantur*, &c.

Justice to the Rev. Martin Fulk, as one of The Muses, and an amiable regard for posterity, compel us to notice two or three other important matters which were most learnedly treated of in this first chapter. In the first place, there was an erudite disquisition upon the period when the Nicene creed first began to be *sung* in the church, and in what way it was sung; whether in *plano cantu* or with descant, the *contrapunctum simplex*, the *contrapunctum figuratum*, &c., together with an inquiry into the origin of organs as a part of ecclesiastical music. He had also discussed the singular custom of the *Episcopus Puerorum, in die Inno-*

centium, or the Boy Bishop, as anciently practised in the Cathedral of Sarum. The Hebrew, Syriac, Chaldee, Arabic, Greek, and Latin authorities whom he consulted in the course of these labours, and the scholiasts whose interpretations and glosses he perpended, would have amazed a modern scholar; and no doubt they amazed even Dr. Ambrose, although his exclusive studies lay in those now neglected paths of learning. But to return from this digression.

Fulk sent the seventh copy of his work to his intimate friend PETER PLYMSELL, Esq. R. A., Professor of Painting at the Royal Academy. He had touched upon the fine arts,—showed their connexion with national greatness,—given his opinions of some of the principal masters of the Italian, Flemish, and Spanish schools,—explained the reasons why historical painting had never flourished in England, and entered into an elaborate explanation of Holbein's Dance of Death. If there were any part of his work upon which he piqued himself more than another, always excepting the needles and angels, and the immortal first chapter, it

was this; and he was therefore a little anxious to have the benefit of his friend Plymsell's experience, *if* (which was not likely, he thought,) there were room for correction. The eighth and last copy he sent to his old crony, GABRIEL HUNDY, of the Inner Temple; an author by profession; a bookseller's writer of all work; poet, dramatist, novelist, traveller, tourist, translator, essayist, biographer, and critic, by the week, month, or quarter. He called himself a "man of letters generally;" and as nothing came amiss to him, he thought he was eminently qualified to discover *if* there were any thing amiss in the book, (which was not likely, he thought,) and which, as the title imported, contained a "little of every thing."

Of course, he accompanied each manuscript copy of the *Omnium Gatherum* (except the one he gave to Dr. Ambrose himself) with a letter, setting forth how much he should be gratified, and how deeply he should feel obliged to his several friends, if they could find time to run their eye over the work, and, with a pen or pencil in their hands, make such alterations, corrections, or erasures, as their own taste,

judgment, knowledge, erudition, &c. &c. might suggest. He implored them to be candid, to stand upon no delicacy, to show no mercy. He was so earnest in his solicitations to be treated unsparingly, that it must have appeared as if he intended to measure the degree of their friendship for him, by the extent of their dilapidations upon his manuscript.

In less than three months he received back the whole of the eight copies. The first that was returned was from his friend the rector, Dr. Ambrose; the last, from Professor McFarlane of Aberdeen. He did not break the seals of one of them till they were *all* upon his library table; and then he set to work. In every one there was a letter full of compliments upon the seven-eighths which did *not* fall within the scope of each writer's revision; and equally full of sincere assurances of the pleasure with which his wishes had been most scrupulously obeyed in what regarded the remaining eighth. His old crony, Gabriel Hundy, was the only one who informed him that *he* had gone through it "generally," and done what was necessary.

The bland self-complacency with which he

commenced his task may be easily imagined. He spread before him his own chaste and faultless copy, innocent of a single blot or erasure, and beaming upon him like some bright vision of future glory. He had prepared a beautiful crow-quill pen, whose fine pointed nib, he thought, would enable him to mark the corrections and alterations, *if* there were any, (which was not likely,) almost without disfiguring the manuscript. Nay, the more effectually to secure this object, he had also provided himself with a new penknife, the blade of which was exquisitely tempered; so that by carefully scratching out the few words that might possibly be erased here and there, and writing in their substitutes with his delicate crow-quill, after using a little pounce, he expected to leave no more traces of these last touches, than are visible upon the canvass of Martin, or Jackson, when their pictures are finally removed from the easel.

He began—yes, he began—and he finished too—yes, he finished—but—"Hear this, ye Gods, and wonder how you made him!" He took the manuscripts, one by one, and he per-

petrated upon his own virgin copy all the diabolical mutilations, expurgations, alterations, emendations, and every other ation, which the infernal civility of his friends had perpetrated upon theirs. A crow-quill! Pooh! Before he had done, he wore down seven porcupine quills to the stump; while his exquisitely-tempered penknife-blade had become as blunt as the edge of a battered halfpenny, with incessant scraping. And when he had done, his manuscript could be compared to nothing so aptly as to a ream of those broad, black, parallel lines which cook maids and 'prentice boys buy for a penny a row, that they may write their love-letters straight, and keep proper distances between their lines.

His friend, Nathaniel Barnaby, of C. C. College, Oxford, had played the very devil with his logic; he had "chopped" it all to pieces—to very ribbons. His quondam fellow-student, Marmaduke Finch, the first-rate poet, had clapped his d—d extinguisher upon every one of Fulk's own effusions, except "*An Impromptu to a* BLUE BOTTLE, *written in the* DOG DAYS." The Rev. Henry Micklefield, the

celebrated historian, settled all his *disputed* points of English history by a marginal *nota bene.* "These are all *indisputable* facts;" and Dr. Ambrose upset the whole of his calculations of the angels, by demonstrating, as he contended, that the celebrated thesis of the schoolmen of the middle ages, related not to a tailor's or a Whitechapel needle, but to Cleopatra's needle—the huge obelisk of Egyptian granite, which bore that appellation.*

But it would fill two volumes to exemplify the whole of the outrages committed upon his volume. We shall therefore only add, that his old crony, Gabriel Hundy, "the man of

* We are not inclined to enter into any controversy with the learned Ambrose; but we may observe, *en passant,* that the erudite Professor of Theology at the renowned University of Salamanca, NOODLEBURGIUS NINCOMPOOPUS, who flourished in the fourteenth century, in his DISSERTATIO (see vol. v. p. 826, fol. edit. Madrid 1572), has an admirable chapter upon the various kinds of needles, and inclines to the plausible supposition that the proper one would be, such as is mentioned in Scripture, with an eye large enough for a camel to squeeze through. "But," he adds, "I have never been able to meet with one of those, though I have made many inquiries."

letters generally," informed him he had "gone generally through his work," and contrived to strike out just the little of each division which the others had left. In short, the labour of seventeen years, which had gone from Fulk a plump, robust, well-filled volume, became a mere skeleton, a shadow—a book in the last stage of a consumption—a thin, miserable starveling, doctored and physicked like a Sangrado patient. There was the title-page, indeed, and there were the heads of the chapters, with here and there a solitary truism, such as, "Painting is a delightful art."—"Poetry has been defined the music of language."—"The lever is a mechanical power of great use," &c. &c. But the title-page was no longer appropriate; for, instead of *Omnium Gatherum, or a little of every thing*, it had become, *Omnium Scatterum, or every thing gone but a little.* The heads of the chapters were like the cherubin and seraphin, without tails: and the solitary truisms resembled the ruins of Kenilworth Castle, or Tintern Abbey, proclaiming only, that they had once been parts of a noble and stately edifice.

Such were the consequences of asking the

advice of friends; or, in other words, subjecting our own ideas to the Procrustean ordeal of being fitted to other men's vanity. Let every man try to please himself, and the chances are ninety-nine to a hundred that he will please every body; but let him begin by trying to please every body, and he has not even the solitary hundredth chance in favour of pleasing himself. Which, then, is the wiser course?

As to the Rev. Martin Fulk, it had such an effect upon him, during the rest of his life, that had it been his humour to sip molten lead for breakfast instead of Mocha coffee, with red-hot buttered pantiles for muffins, he would have done so, and taken the consequences, rather than risk the consequences of asking his doctor whether they would be good for him. It must be acknowledged, however, he was sometimes apt to push his doctrine of consulting nobody's opinions but his own to extremes, particularly on one occasion, when lodging in a crazy old house, which was wont to groan and crack most alarmingly, if there happened to be a little more wind than ordinary.

"You had better not live there," said one

friend. "It will tumble about your ears some night or other," said a second. "How can you be so obstinate?" cried a third. But the more they talked, the more he was resolved to take warning by the old man and his ass in the fable, and neither to walk by his ass, carry his ass, nor ride his ass. At length there came a devil of a thunder-storm one night, and sure enough, the whole building *did* "tumble about his ears." He went to bed that night in an attic apartment; the next morning he was dug out of a cellar. Thither he had descended, bed and all, with no other serious mischief than being almost suffocated with dust, and quite up to his chin in brick and mortar. Three of the principal rafters, which could not endure to be separated after having stood together so many years, stuck to each other in their hour of common peril more firmly than ever; and to the fidelity of their mutual attachment he was indebted for a defence which was unquestionably the means of saving his life.

CHAPTER XV.

HAVING performed our duty as faithful historians towards the Rev. Martin Fulk, we hasten to discharge ourselves of our promise, in recording one more of the many celebrated sittings of THE MUSES.

Claridge was so well pleased with the result of his former proposition, which had produced such a splendid gallery of political portraits, that he afterwards devised several other novel schemes for bringing out, in some original and striking manner, the intellectual stores of his associates. On one occasion he suggested, and his suggestion was adopted, that they should impersonate, as it were, the illustrious dead, and carry on their conversation with the nearest possible approach to that which they could

suppose would be the conversation of those whose characters they supported. Anachronisms were disregarded; for at the meeting where this experiment was tried, the distribution of the parts was thus arranged: — Cosmo Blakeway was ANDREW MARVEL; Claridge himself, SAMUEL JOHNSON; poor Reginald Danby, LAWRENCE STERNE; John Julius Wilson, DENNIS the critic; A. A. Potts, ALEXANDER POPE; Horace Twiselden, SIR RICHARD STEELE; Mansfield Granville, ADDISON (who was always taciturn in company); Charles Ardent, SIR CHARLES SEDLEY; and Mr. Mc Swinn, ALLAN RAMSAY.

The zest of the thing lay in each doing his best, to think and talk like the individual he represented; and as they mellowed in their parts, some brilliant flashes of colloquial wit, humour, imagination, and reasoning, burst forth. Claridge was really great in DR. JOHNSON; Wilson snarled in the very spirit of DENNIS; Mc Swinn's Scotch *naïveté* was frequently most characteristic in ALLAN RAMSAY; and the sturdy vigour of Cosmo Blakeway's mind enabled him to view most subjects through

the rough medium of ANDREW MARVEL'S character.

On another occasion, SHAKSPEARE and his contemporaries, old BEN amongst the rest, were personified. This was a noble display, for Claridge was the Bard of Avon; and the specific object of the plan was, to draw from him, under feigned questionings, not only the meanings of certain passages, but elucidations of his own great conceptions in particular characters. No man living, — no man perhaps among all those who have undertaken to analyze and expound the writings of Shakspeare, ever studied him so profoundly, or was so thoroughly imbued with his mighty spirit, as Claridge. No man could follow his daring flights with an eye so piercing and steady; and it may almost be doubted whether Shakspeare himself was so intimately acquainted with all he had written as Claridge, who had worshipped him for years with the deep devotion of idolatry.

The conversation was skilfully adapted to bring forth the fruits of this long and elaborate study; and warming, as he frequently

did, with his theme, he poured out such a stream of mind, in tracing the course of the mind with whose attributes he had imaginatively clothed himself—pourtrayed, with such a glowing mixture of passion, philosophy, and poetry, the characters of Hamlet, Othello, Caliban, Macbeth, the Wierd Sisters, &c. that surely, could the divine creator of those characters have listened to the revelation of his own imaginings, he would have exclaimed, "Yes! it was thus I intended!"

Sometimes the sittings of THE MUSES assumed a dramatic form, embracing, as it might happen, the whole, or only a portion of the members. On these occasions, a suppositious scene was agreed upon, and suppositious characters assigned to those who were to carry on the extempore fiction. It was one of these dramatic sittings that we have undertaken to record. The idea emanated from Claridge; and as it required rather an intimate knowledge of the manners and customs of the close of the sixteenth century, the interlocutors were restricted to himself, John Julius Wilson, and A. A. Potts, who undertook to study *his* part.

The design was, that these three should represent three companions meeting on May-day, in the year 1596; and partly by narrative, partly by dialogue, describe the manner in which the day was passed. Claridge agreed, besides sustaining his share of the dialogue, to supply narration where it seemed to be required; while, in order to give a greater air of novelty and of reality to the thing, they took to themselves specific designations. Claridge was to be called *Gerald Leslie;* Wilson, *Peregrine Morton;* and A. A. Watts, *Sir Marmaduke Lamont*, a travelled fop of those days.

The Muses assembled in high glee, to witness this new display of fanciful personification. The cloth was drawn, the usual toasts disposed of, and the table replenished with wine, when the President called upon the three *Muses* to "leave their damnable faces, and begin." After a short pause, Claridge led up to the dialogue by the following description.

"It was May morning,—that merry season of the year, when, as honest Master Stowe says, 'every man, except impediment hinder, walks into the sweet meadows and green woods, there

to rejoice his spirits with the beauty and savour of sweet flowers, and with the singing of birds, praising God in their kind,'—that three gallants, oddly matched, but with good fellowship nevertheless, betook them early to 'observe the rite of May'* in the fields and verdant lanes of

* As all our readers may not be so familiar as the *Muses*, with the allusions to ancient manners and customs contained in the text, we shall venture to subjoin a few illustrations.

It is hardly necessary to observe, that it was anciently the custom for all ranks of people to go out *a-Maying* on the first of May. It is on record, that Henry VIII. and Queen Catherine partook of this diversion. The *rite* of this month was once so universally observed, that even authors thought their works would obtain a more favourable reception, if published on May-day. The porter's man, in Henry VIII., speaking of the crowds who were assembled to witness the ceremony of the christening, says—

"'Tis as much impossible
(Unless we sweep them from the door with cannons,)
To scatter them, as 'tis to make them sleep
On May-day morning."

The Maypole is thus described in Stubbes's Anatomie of Abuses:—"But their cheefest iewell thei bryng from thence is their *Maie pole*, whiche thei bryng home with great veneration as thus: Thei have twentie or fourtie yoke of

Finsbury, or along the sunny slopes beyond which, embosomed in woods, lay the pleasant village of Hornsey.

"They had not strolled above a mile, when their eyes were gladdened, and their hearts leaped joyfully, at the sight of the sport-inspiring Maypole, surrounded by a frolicsome group of old and young, lads and lasses—the buxom matron and jocund maiden—the grandsire of threescore and the stout yeoman-husband—whose spirits and motions were equally light. There they were, dancing, carolling, shouting, and, by a thousand merry gambols, offering blithe welcome to returning Spring. In the midst of them, moved tall and stately on, the gaily-decked Maypole, drawn by oxen, their horns wreathed with flowers; while the pole itself was covered, from top to bottom, with fresh garlands and sweet-smelling herbs, inter-

oxen, every oxe hauyng a sweete nosegaie of flowers placed on the tippe of his hornes, and these oxen draw home this Maie pole (this stynckyng idoll rather) whiche is covered all ouer with flowers and hearbes bounde rounde aboute with strynges from the top to the bottome, and some tyme painted with variable colours," &c.

mingling their bright hues with the gay colours of the ribbons by which they were fastened.

"Our gallants would fain have joined them, but they had settled their pastimes for the day; so, taking a different path from that which would have brought them into the company of the revellers, they kept on their way, listening ever and anon to the gladsome sounds of pipe and voice, as they came fainter and fainter on the vernal breeze."

Here Claridge signified, that either Wilson or Potts should commence the dialogue. The former took the hint with the greater alacrity; and addressing Claridge—(whom we shall now call *Gerald Leslie*, as we shall the other two by their dramatic names)—

"What say you?" said he. — "Here we are, at the manor of Kilbourne: shall we strike across yon smiling fields, and, by the green wood on the left of that primrose-covered bank, on to Barnet Friern?* What though the hos-

* Barnet Friern, or Fryars Barnet, is a small parish situated within the liberties of Finsbury and Wenslackbarn, to the north-east of Finchley Common. It was anciently the property of the Friars of St. John of Jerusalem in

pitable friars of St. John of Jerusalem are no longer at their manse, ready to refresh weary travellers, we shall find a hostel, I warrant; for there be more ivy garlands between Moor Ditch and St. Alban's, than you can reckon simplers in all Bucklersbury."*

"Nay," replied Claridge,—(we mean *Gerald Leslie*,)—"we have strayed too far already, seeing what we propose—"

"And seeing, I trow," interrupted *Sir Marmaduke Lamont*, "that we are of a unanimous

Clerkenwell, and is situated about nine miles from London. In the manor-house, called the Friary, or Friern House, there are still several remains of antiquity visible. Under the floor of the modern hall, built about 1660, is an excavation supposed to have been the lavatory or bath of the friars. This house was originally the manse or country-house of the Friars of St. John, and the first hospitium for the entertainment of travellers upon the northern road.

* Bucklersbury, towards the end of the sixteenth century, was chiefly inhabited by druggists, who sold all kinds of herbs, green as well as dry. Falstaff, in the Merry Wives of Windsor, says to Mrs. Ford—"I cannot cry, and say, Thou art this and that, like a many of those lisping hawthorn buds, that come like women in men's apparel, and smell like Bucklersbury in simple-time."

resolve not to stray *from* our purpose. I remember when I was in Venice—"

"Ay, come, give us a touch of thy travel, *Signor Lamont*," interrupted *Leslie*, in his turn, while an expression of playful mockery quivered about his lips: "show us how a statesman manages his toothpick: tell us the price of suckets, canary, prunellas, parmasan, Venice glasses—"

"Or," added *Morton*, "swear you saw chopinoes* of such rare art, that, in the dance, they sent forth music by a secret sympathy with the tread, and to any tune."

* A chopine was a high-heeled shoe. Hamlet, in his reception of the players, says to one of them—"What! my young lady and mistress! By 'r Lady, your ladyship is nearer to Heaven than when I saw you last, by the altitude of a chopine." The reader who wishes to see a description of this part of an Italian female's dress, given by Tom Coryat in his 'Crudities,' may find it, if he have not Coryat's book, in a note of Isaac Reed's, upon the above passage in Shakspeare. It seems to have been a sort of clog worn under the shoe, and, according to Coryat, was sometimes half a yard high! The chopinoes alluded to in the text is thus described by *Freshwater*, a travelled fop, in the Comedy of 'The Ball,' by Chapman and Shirley.

 "Marry,

"But most I love to hear thee discourse," continued *Leslie*, "of the Venetian tire, that paragon of vain-glory, bedecked with streamers, flags, and ensigns, and putting to utter shame the simple kerchief and sober coif of our poor English taste."

"Why, look ye, friends," said *Sir Marmaduke Lamont*, glancing first at *Leslie*, then at *Morton*, "is it *my* fault that fortune could not be *my* friend, without being *your* enemy?"

"How mean you?" asked *Leslie*.

"Marry, by the putting out of one for five,"* replied *Sir Marmaduke*. "Ha, ha,

"Marry, that very morning I left Venice
I had intelligence of a new device.
I know not
What countryman invented, but they say
There be chopinoes made with such rare art,
That, worn by a lady, when she means to dance,
Shall with their very motion sound forth music,
And by a secret sympathy with their tread
Strike any tune, that without other instrument,
Their feet both dance and play."

* The fashion of travelling, during the reigns of Elizabeth and James, was gravely censured by Ascham in his

boys!—do ye wince? It was a sore price, I grant, for the pleasure of seeing me safe home from Venice. And yet you would have trebled your venture, I can tell you, and gladly too, had you seen me when I lay ill of my fever at the palace of Donna Margaretta de Pia—by my faith, would you? But, take comfort, lads! I am bent upon a visit to the court of the Grand Turk—thence to Jerusalem—shall make a summer of it in Cathaia, and certainly pass my Christmas in the dominions of Prester John. Now, when I undertake *this* voyage, I intend

'Schoolmaster;' and by Bishop Hall in his 'Quo Vadis,' as one of the principal causes of corrupt manners. Shakspeare, and all the dramatists of that period, were fond of ridiculing the affectation of travellers. It was also a prevailing practice, about the latter end of the sixteenth and commencement of the seventeenth centuries, for those who engaged in long and hazardous expeditions, (as such journeys were then accounted, which would not, now, agitate the nerves of an alderman's daughter,) to place out a sum of money, on condition of receiving great interest for it if they escaped all dangers by sea and land, and came safely back. This species of gaming, (for it had its origin in no better spirit,) was at first confined to the nobility, but gradually became a trade among persons who undertook journeys

that all those friends who never hoped to see me back from Venice, shall have their chance for coining those hopes into quintuple their present loss. *Chance*, do I say? By Mars! I shall write mine own epitaph before I set forth; for though I will most certainly go, I do most certainly expect never to return."

"Be merciful, good Signior!" said *Morton*.—"We will rather bear the loss we have, than

merely for the sake of the gain at their return. In the play already quoted, (The Ball,) Freshwater says—

"Do you see this roll?
I have good security for my money, Sir?
Nor an egg here but has five chickens in't:
I did most politickly disburse my sums
To have five for one at my return from Venice:
And now, I thank my stars, I am at home!"

Puntarvolo, too, in Ben Jonson's 'Every Man out of his Humour,' says—"I do intend, this year of jubilee coming on, to travel; and (because I will not altogether go upon expense,) I am determined to put some five thousand pound, to be paid me *five* for *one*, upon the return of my wife, myself, and my dog, from the Turk's court at Constantinople." Shakspeare, in 'The Tempest,' speaks of "each putter-out of one for five."

see England without her jewel, the incomparable and nobly accomplished Sir Marmaduke Lamont, peerless among men, invincible among ladies."

"Why, faith, you have me there," replied *the Knight*, smiling wantonly.—"I do not absolutely profess to have a patent from Nature for monopolizing her most exquisite workmanship; but, in very truth, each divine she, who sacrifices the morning to her glass, the afternoon to the stage, and the evening to revelling, is sainted in my calendar. I have no frosty constitution."

"Thus discoursing," said Claridge, in *propria persona*, who perceived that Wilson was not ready with fresh matter of conversation—"thus discoursing, and mutually rallying each other, they continued their walk, retracing their steps towards St. Paul's. The day, as it advanced, was becoming sultry; and *Lamont*, fanning himself with the plume which he wore in his rich cap of Genoa velvet, exclaimed—"

"Now could I almost persuade myself," (interrupted Potts, catching adroitly the drift of Claridge's words) "I walked beneath a Ve-

netian sky, save that, in delicious Italy, you will nowhere see the rank vapour which floats pestilently, as you perceive, over our London."

"What though the heavens be purer!" said *Leslie*, "the earth is not so lovely. Confess now, Signior, that in all your travels, out of merry England, you never saw a field or a hedge-row which was not parched; gaping with dusty chinks, and tawny as the lion's hide."

"I dare be sworn," added *Morton*, "his eyes did not once rest upon as much of the soft green which here breathes freshness to the spirit on every side, as would have made a kirtle for queen Mab."

"What does the reek of yon lime-kilns breathe?" said *Sir Marmaduke*. "Bah! You may believe me, for it is a verity I speak; there is not in all Venice, no, nor in Padua nor Florence, where I sojourned during the carnival season, an unsavory odour. 'Tis a land of fragrance! The air holds in perpetual dalliance the aromatic essences of violets, roses, woodbine, and every odoriferous plant."

"I marvel," observed *Morton*, "how you could return to this churlish clime, which of late, methinks, has become so unseasonable, that our July has been like to a February, and our June to an April. Our years are turned upside down. Our summers are no summers; our harvests are no harvests; our seed times are no seed times. For a great space, scant any day has been seen, that it hath not rained upon us." *

"Or, as my loving friend, Will Shakspeare, has pleasantly conceited it, in his witty play of

* It may be some consolation to those who insist that the seasons have changed, for the worse, in England, (especially during the last three summers,) to know that the expressions put into the mouth of *Morton* are taken almost literally from an extract of one of Dr. J. King's Lectures preached at York, in which that divine reminds his hearers of the various signs of God's wrath with which England was visited in 1593 and 1594, as storms, pestilence, dearth, and wet weather. Having spoken of three successive years of scarcity, he says, "And see, whether the Lord doth not threaten us much more, by sending such unseasonable weather, and storms of rain among us; which if we will observe, and compare it with that which is past, we may say that the course of nature is very much inverted." The lines

a 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' now acting at the Blackfriars," said *Leslie*,

> 'We see
> The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
> Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose;
> And on old Hyems' chin, and icy crown,
> An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
> Is, as in mockery, set: the spring, the summer,
> The chiding autumn, angry winter change
> Their wonted liveries; and the mazed world,
> By their increase, now knows not which is which.'"

"Does the Blackfriars hold the same repute that it was wont, when I left England?" inquired *Sir Marmaduke*. "Or has the *Curtain*, and the *Red Bull*, drawn away its company?"

"No, faith," replied *Leslie*—"*they* are still the resort of the citizens; but your men of true discernment, your scholars and courtiers, and they who carry more precious honour in their veins than other men, whose blood is of a deeper crimson, affect the *Bankside*, where

from Shakspeare's 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' written, according to Malone, in 1594, are considered by his commentators, to refer to the same inclemency of the elements.

Hercules supports the Globe on his brawny shoulders, or sit on the stage, at Blackfriars, to try appeals of wit."

"How does it jump with your humours," said *Sir Marmaduke*, "before we take water for Greenwich, to look upon some delicate monsters which are for show in Fleet Street?"

"What monsters be they?" asked *Morton*.

"Marvellous dainty ones, by my troth," answered *the Knight*. "I have seen them, so can speak."

"Impart, impart," said *Leslie;* "and according as is thy report shall be our inclining."

"Imprimis," continued *Lamont*, "there is the strange Indian, an outlandish beast, lately brought from the land of Cathaia, whither, as I have possessed you, I purpose to travel, ere long. Secondly, the painted fish, a monstrous fish—in the form of a woman from the waist upwards. Thirdly, the swart savage with the long tail, who, when he found himself in captivity, for very choler and disdain, bit his tongue in twain within his mouth, and notwithstanding died not. Lastly, Signor Lazarus

and his brother, Baptista, who grows out of his navel."

"I like not any of them," said *Leslie;* "least of all, your fish, which has been so long out of water, it must needs smell abominably; and as for your seeming woman, the earth has more of such monsters than the sea."

"Well then," rejoined *Lamont*, "here is the Dolphin, the very paragon of Cheapside taverns—and that, peradventure, is a fish more to thy mind, as I confess it is to mine; for I do thirst hugely after a cup of canary."

"Ay," answered *Leslie*, "we will enter, and thou shalt be our purveyor. I have heard, Signior, that your Venetian drinker has so cunning a palate in the distinction of wines, he will tell you the vineyard by the smell, and the very tree whence the grape was plucked, after he has tasted. Is it so, Signior?"

"Indifferently for that," said *Sir Marmaduke;* "but I knew a man of Cyprus, when in Venice, who would toss you off a potation compounded of six kindred wines, (so like to each other, that even I could not name their distinct qualities,) and call them all, in the very order

of their mingling. You may believe me, for I tell it you on proof. I saw with my own eyes, and heard with my own ears—"

"The knave of Cyprus drink the wine, and the fool of England most inimitably gulled!" said *Morton*. "You may believe me, Signior."

They entered the Dolphin, and were scarcely seated in their room, when the drawer came in with a quart of raw sack.

"An it please you, my worthy masters," continued *Claridge*, assuming, for the moment, the new character he had thus introduced—"an it please you—"

"How if it do not please us, thou Jack-sauce," interrupted *Lamont*.

"Why then, it shall displease me to have come upon so blank an errand," replied the *tapster*.

"Well, to your errand, and straight," answered *the Knight*.

"An it please you, my worthy masters, as I have already said—"

"And therefore needed not to say it now," again interrupted *Lamont*. "But proceed, honest *Brabo*."

"An it were midnight instead of noon, I could not proceed," replied he, "save as I have, which is, that an it please you, my worthy masters, (for thus was I instructed, and I have a memory,) some worshipful company in the *Mermaid*—"

"Why worshipful, thou whoreson reckoner of forgotten scores?" said *Sir Marmaduke.*

"Marry, because they belong to the corporalty of the city," answered *Brabo.*

"A discreet and pregnant answer," continued *Lamont.* "Despatch!"

"This worshipful company, being of no girth to go forth and welcome in the May, in the pied meadows, (as I see thou hast, by the sweet posies in thy hands,) came thereupon to the *Dolphin*, took possession incontinently of the *Mermaid*, have chirped over their sack as blithely as grasshoppers, and now send you this noggin, craving to sacrifice their loving services to you and May morning."*

* It seems to have been a common custom at taverns, in this age, to send presents of wine from one room to another, either as a memorial of friendship, or by way of introduction, or merely as an act of courtesy. Master Brook, in

"We thank them for their love," said *Morton*, "and return their services; but prythee tell them they are mistaken when they call it a sacrifice; for sacrifices are always *burnt*, and this wine is *raw*."

"I will e'en do so," quoth the tapster; "though it be odds, an Master Krabb the fellmonger be in his moods, whether I shall not have to duck for it, out of respect to mine head; for he may construe an affront from my message."

"If this, now, were a bride cup, all seemly besilvered and parcel gilt," said *Lamont*, "or,

the 'Merry Wives of Windsor,' sends "a morning's draught of sack," by Bardolph, to Sir John Falstaff, at the Garter Inn. The well-known anecdote of Ben Jonson and Bishop Corbet, of which use has been made in the text, furnishes another instance: and even as late as the Restoration, the same custom prevailed; for in Dr. Price's Life of General Monk, is the following passage: "I came to the Three Tuns before Guildhall, where the General had quartered two nights before. I entered the tavern with a servant and portmanteau, and asked for a room, which I had scarce got into but wine followed me as a present from some citizens, desiring leave to drink their morning's draught with me."

if it were a Venice glass, in which, having drunk to our Venus, we might after moralize the sex, by throwing it to the ground, a glittering ruin; and if the bride or the Venus were, in beauty, a Helen,—in presence, a Cleopatra,—in endowments, a Zenobia, with the melting kisses and moving embraces of a Myrrha,—if she could blush without guilt, love without guile, discourse *of* love, without lightness, converse *with* love, without looseness——"

"And if *Signior Lamont*, the mirror of knighthood, the silken votary of amorous passion," exclaimed *Leslie*, "whom these conceits and toys of a hot liver thus transport, were the bridegroom of such a bride, or the Adonis of such a Venus—ah me! If!"

"What then?" said *Sir Marmaduke*.—"What then, mad-cap? Eh?"

"Nay," replied *Leslie*, "I but build upon *your* conditions. When you have told us what would be, if all *your* geese were swans, it shall go hard but I will show a goose to cackle to your swans."

"Out upon these fooleries!" cried *Morton*. "Let us be contemplative! We have talked

without thinking, long enough: let us now think without talking. It is good to lift up our minds—to exercise them in mysteries!"

"As you ever do," said *Leslie*, laughing, "when the giant, wine, hath bound the pigmy, tongue, in chains. When thou canst not talk, thou art the worshipper of thought. At the coming on of the distemperature, you cry, 'Out upon it! Foh! Words! words!—what are they but unsavoury breath, the empty tinkling of cymbals? Let us not be base worldlings, stooping to every lure; like vile haggards who lie down and dare not give wing, for fear of weathering.' At the end of your homily, you fold your arms, stretch your legs, draw your bonnet o'er your brow, and lo,—the philosopher —sleeps!"

Morton acted to the very letter, *Leslie's* raillery. He was asleep; overcome by the feigned heat of the day, his fictitious fatigue, and the potency of his imaginary potations of canary.

"He hath set up his rest," observed *Lamont;* "else had I a suitable tale, which I heard while in Venice, that would have tickled his humour. But let it pass."

"By no means, Signior," replied *Leslie*; "*I* have a humour that a merry tale can tickle."

"Nay, for the mirth of it," answered *Lamont*, "that must be extracted from the moral, as you shall hear. There was a citizen of Milan, (I made his acquaintance in the latter end of my abode in that city,) a physician, for such as were lunatic, who took upon him to cure, within a certain time, all who were brought to him. And he cured them after this sort. He had a plat of ground near his house; in it, a pit of corrupt and stinking water, wherein he bound, naked, to a stake, such as were mad; some, knee deep, others to the groin, and some deeper, according to the degree of their madness, where he so long pined them with water and hunger, till they seemed sound. Now, amongst others, there was one brought whom he had put thigh deep in water; but, after fifteen days, he began to recover, beseeching the physician that he might be taken out. The physician, in his compassion, took him out, but with this condition, that he should not pass the outer gate.

"Now it chanced, as on a time he stood at

the gate, (for out he durst not go, lest he should return to the pit,) he beckoned a young gentleman to come unto him who had a hawk and two spaniels, being much moved with the novelty thereof; for, to his remembrance, before he fell mad, he had never seen the like. The young gentleman being come unto him, 'Sir,' quoth he, 'I pray a word or two. What is this you ride on, and how do you employ him?'

"'This is a horse,' replied he, 'and I keep him for hawking.'

"'But what call you that you carry in your fist, and how do you use it?'

"'This is a hawk,' said he, 'and I use to fly with it at plover and partridge.'

"'But what,' quoth he, 'are these which follow you? what do they, or wherein do they profit you?'

"'These are dogs,' said he, 'and necessary for hawking, to find and retrieve my game.'

"'And what may those birds be worth, for which you provide so many things, if you should reckon all you take for a whole year?'

"'I know not,' said he, 'very well; they are worth a very little; not above six crowns.'

" ' And what, then, may be the charge you are at with your horse, dogs, and hawk?'—

" ' Some fifty crowns.'—

" ' Away, away, Sir! fly quickly; hence, before our physician return home! If he find you here, he will throw *you* into a pit chin-deep, as one that is the maddest man alive; there to be cured with those who have lost their wits.' "

" Beshrew me!" exclaimed *Leslie*, when *Sir Marmaduke* had finished, " I would go far about ere I would confess me of my grosser follies to such a lunatic. Strip all our actions thus of the apparel of custom, and the wisest among us might have cause to blush."

" And now," said Claridge, addressing Potts, " be yourself a spectator only, and a listener, while you," he continued, turning to Wilson, " may sleep on, till I arouse you. I have a scene of my own to go through."

The *Muses* emptied their glasses, filled them again, Wilson closed his eyes, and Claridge narrated.

" At this moment, a sudden hurlyburly in the street drew them both to the window,

where they saw a Bedlam beggar* surrounded by a crowd of noisy boys and idle men. Whether he was really insane, or one of those impostors who affected lunacy as a means of levying contributions upon the charitable, it would have been difficult to determine, so ad-

* This description of mendicant lives in the mighty page of Shakspeare. Edgar, when he resolves to "take the basest and most poorest shape," as a means of safety from his enemies, says—

"The country gives me proof and precedent
Of Bedlam beggars, who, with roaring voices
Strike in their numm'd and mortified bare arms
Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary,
And with this horrible object, from low farms,
Poor pelting villages, sheep-cotes and mills,
Sometime with lunatick bans, sometime with prayers,
Enforce their charity."

In 'The Bell-man of London,' by Dekker, is an account of one of these characters, under the title of an *Abraham-Man;* and Aubrey, in his MS. Remains of Gentilisme and Judaisme, says, "Before the civil warres, I remember Tom-a-Bedlams went about begging. They had been such as had been in Bedlam, and come to some degree of sobernesse; and when they were licensed to go out they had on their left arm an armilla of tinne printed, of about three inches breadth, which was sordered on."

mirable was the counterfeit, if counterfeit it were. He was a short, thick-set fellow, with a red, squalid beard and inflamed eyes, carrying a long staff in his hand, and a cow-horn by his side.

" His dress seemed to be composed of the sweepings of a tailor's shop, fantastically stitched together, of an infinite variety of colours, decked out with flaunting shreds of ribbon, and trumpery feathers. His arms, legs, and breast, were partly naked, and disclosed, in several places, pins, sprigs of rosemary, and other sharp substances thrust into the flesh. Sometimes, he sung, repeating scraps of old ballads; then would he laugh aloud, as in mirth of those who were laughing at him, or dance with strange antics and motions. Ever and anon, he raved about Bedlam, cried 'Poor Tom is a-cold!' and held out his horn for meat or drink.

" In the country, these Tom-a-Bedlams put on so dogged and sullen a look, that when they have bluntly entered a house where there is a small company, they have compelled the servants, through fear, to give them what they demand. They are so dreaded by simple vil-

lagers, that they will run from them faster than a poor cur runs, who has crackers tied to his tail. Yet they will sometimes entreat you humbly enough, with such frantic phrase as 'What will you give poor Tom now? One pound of your sheep's feathers to make poor Tom a blanket? Or one cutting of your sow side to make poor Tom a sharing horn? Or, give poor Tom an old sheet to keep him from the cold!' But here, in London, they become as lean as rakes; you may tell their ribs: and poor Tom may sooner eat his horn, than get it filled with small drink, or his old alms of bacon.

"Some one offered him a piece of money, which he refused.

"'It was riches that made a beggar of poor Tom,' he exclaimed; 'and when *they* went out of doors, his wits went with them as it will be written on his tomb-stone:

'Here lies one who had stock and store,
Had flocks i' the field, had corn o' the floor:
Had groats within, and gates at 's door,
And yet for all, he died poor, died poor.

"'But what then? I was no worse than my neighbours, the rest of the world; for is it not seen, every day of the week, that—

'Sloth, wines, books, eyes, and luscious fare,
The lures of lust and stains of honour are.

"'As thus — man's security is the devil's opportunity, they say; and the crab, when he catches the silly oyster open, by a politic instinct, pops a stone into her shell, and so makes a meal of her. Now, what does the devil do when he finds us gaping and idle? Doth he not cast into our heart some stone of temptation, whereby he devours us? Ah, ha! Do you areed my read? Why then, this is poor Tom's posy for the wearer of three pile:

'Our fathers went in homely frize,
And good plain broadcloth breeches;
Their stockings with the same agrees,
Sew'd on with good strong stitches.

"'My horn is dry, alack! Give to poor Tom that he may eat and drink, and you shall see him no more till Twelfth-tide; for, do I not know —

'He that comes every day shall have a cock-nay,
But he that comes now and then shall have a fat hen?'

"Thus he continued to address the half-pitying, half-deriding group, as he moved slowly

along, mingling apposite snatches of ballads which were in the popular mouth, with the crazed matter of his own thoughts. When he was out of hearing, they withdrew from the window, and *Leslie*, tickling the nose of *Morton*, who still slept, with the fringe of one of his gloves—(the fringe of a doyley did as well on the present occasion)—

" Rouse thee, dormouse!" he cried. " Know ye not the day is waning, the tide is ebbing, and that, if we tarry longer, her Majesty's Highness will be invisible to us her loving subjects?"

" I have been dreaming of honours," said *Morton*, starting up from his seat. " Methought the Queen's Majesty, out of her abundant grace, had dubbed me a knight—her own true knight; and that I was greeted in the silvery accost of Sir David. The Welsh blood of my ancestors grew proud in my veins."

" Your Welsh blood!" cried *Lamont*. " Do I not know thy birth? The son of old *Walter Morton*, who in his youth was henchman to our Queen's father, bluff Harry. Why, I have heard thy sire tell of his training by Sir Fran-

cis Bryan, master of the henchmen, and how aptly he took to his nurture in riding, wearing his harness, harping, piping, singing, dancing, and all the other virtues and courtesies."

"You say true," replied *Morton*. "Good old Walter was my father; but who was my mother? And who were my mother's kin? The blood of Rhydderch ab Jevan Llwyd is in this body, I can tell you; and the part that is English in me, I am thinking, would hardly carry the privilege of wearing my head, an there went forth a decree forbidding it to all who were Welshmen."

"Have you heard," said *Sir Marmaduke*, addressing *Leslie*, "the newest libel on the Court?

> 'A gentleman of Wales,
> With a knight of Cales,
> And a lord of the North country:
> A yeoman of Kent,
> Upon a racket rent,
> Will buy them out all three.'"

"I can go no further," exclaimed Wilson. "My imagination is drained to the very lees—

my wit is dead beat—I have run my courser to a stand—I cannot picture to myself how we are to finish the day, except we make this room the *Dolphin* in Cheapside, and transform our brother *Muses* into brother roysterers, in trunk hose and taffeta doublets."

"I am with you," said Potts, "in your dilemma. I must visit Cathaia, and make a note of the dominions of Prester John, before I can give you any more touches of my travels."

"Nay then," interrupted Claridge, "let us pay honest *Brabo* the reckoning, and depart. But when we leave the Dolphin, you *shall* accompany me to Greenwich, and I will return with you in the evening."

"But how?" asked Wilson.

"As thus,"—rejoined Claridge.

"They now sallied forth and proceeded by water to Greenwich, where Elizabeth was holding her Court; and where, during the afternoon, she was wont to show herself to her people, walking in the park and gardens, attended by her ladies and officers of her household. Our gallants, mingling with the crowd,

at a respectful distance, had the gratification of seeing, and sometimes of hearing her, for the space of two hours.

" Though now on the wintry side of sixty, wrinkled, and supporting her somewhat feeble steps on the arm of a page, it was easy to perceive that this vainest of women ascribed to her personal attractions the gaze of admiration which was bestowed upon her state The stature of *Lamont* was commanding, his features handsome, and his dress point-device. (Potts smiled graciously.) They were not lost upon the maiden queen. With a haughty, penetrating look, she several times fixed her eyes upon *Sir Marmaduke*, who was more confused than flattered by the notice; while it was evident, from the manner in which the page directed his attention to our knight, that she was enquiring of him who he was. (Potts looked as if he were unconscious that he was listening to mere fiction.)

" A humorous incident occurred just as Elizabeth was retiring. A rustic, rather meanly clothed, who watched his opportunity, when she was not engaged in conversation, asked in a

loud voice, 'Which is the Queen?' and repeating the question, before *Leslie*, who stood next to him, could answer it, she turned round and said, 'I am your Queen,—what wouldst thou have with me?'

"'You!' exclaimed the fellow—'No, no—you are the rarest woman I ever saw, and can eat no more than my daughter Madge, who is thought the properest lass in our parish, though short of you; but that Queen Elizabeth I look for, devours so many of my hens, ducks, and capons, as I am not able to live.'*

"Elizabeth laughed heartily and passed on; the countryman had shot his bolt, and withdrew. Ever auspicious to all suits which were made through the medium of flattery to her comely person, and not less disposed, at all times, to punish oppression *in* her subjects, she caused inquiry to be made as to who was the purveyor that had so grossly abused his office, issued a special order for his trial, according to a statute formerly made to prevent such abuses, and upon proof of his guilt suffered him to be hanged.

* This incident is related by old Francis Osborne, in his 'Traditional Memorials on the Reign of Queen Elizabeth,' as a circumstance that actually occurred.

"This finished the day. With the evening sun our May revellers returned to London; but the sun had descended in a blaze of glory, and the gentle moon shed her soft beams upon the rippling water ere they landed. As their boat glided swiftly along, their discourse was seasoned with many agreeable stories and pleasant ditties. *Morton* being called upon to sing, as one known to have a musical voice, he said he would give them the amorous strain of his dear friend, though now dead, Kit Marlowe; and then sung, with a simple and touching melody, the tender lines beginning—

> 'Come live with me and be my love,
> And we will all the pleasures prove
> That hills and valleys, dale and field,
> And all the craggy mountains yield.'

"*Sir Marmaduke* related several marvellous adventures which, as he protested, had befallen him in his travels; and *Leslie*, to rebuke his inventions, told the following merry-conceited tale:—

"'A certain traveller, or at least one who desired, though he never deserved, that title, reporting wonderful and incredible things which

he had seen, among the rest did tell this:—'Upon a time, it befel,' (said he) 'that I travelled along a certain desert, in Arabia Felix, where I with others who then accompanied me, were assailed by a violent shower, so as labouring to fly for shelter to some covert, we might perceive a little coppice, wherein grew great store of cabbages, of such huge proportion, as the very leaves thereof (so largely extended were the spurges) might, by their greatness, give shadow to five hundred men.'—This tale being told, one among the rest, to answer his tale, makes this reply, by way of discourse upon such occurrents as had happened him in his travel, proceeding thus:—'It fortuned that I, with some other gentlemen of eminent rank and quality, travelled near the Riphean mountains, in the clifts of which mountains, abundance of all metals, but especially of copper, is daily found. Now, as we coasted along, we perceived, some three leagues westward from those mountains, a great number of people beating and knocking with incessant labour, but for what end we knew not; wherefore, with one consent, we resolved to approach nearer them, and see about

what they so eagerly laboured, where we found five hundred braziers making of one cauldron, which was of so huge proportion, as not any one of all those braziers, though they were all employed in one work, could hear one another strike.'—'Good God!' quoth the former traveller, 'for what use was so huge a cauldron made?'—'Surely,' replied the second, 'I cannot imagine for what use it should be, unless it were to boil your cabbage in.' This present and pregnant answer so daunted that fabulous traveller, as he was ever after more sparing in discourse of his travels.'

"*Sir Marmaduke* was silent. He liked not so palpable a hit; and he liked it still less when, as they were stepping out of the boat, (for *their* journey and *Leslie's* tale ended together,) one of the boatmen, addressing his fellow, said, 'Didst ever hear any thing better, Andrew? As the old proverb has it, travellers, poets, and liars, are three words all of one signification.'

"I have a villainous toothache!" exclaimed *Lamont*, as they turned into Lombard Street. "I must to the nearest apothecary, and buy

some drowsy drug to soothe me. Good night—good rest, friends."

"The Signior is angry," said *Morton*.

"It is a wholesome medicine," replied *Leslie*, "and may work a better cure than the drowsy drug he means not to buy, for the toothache which he has not."

"I wonder," said the Rev. Martin Fulk, when Claridge ceased, and the *Muses* had finished applauding the prompt invention of himself, Wilson, and Potts—"I wonder whether it would be possible to have for our next meeting, a scene in Noah's Ark?"

"A what!" exclaimed the Muses in one voice.

"A scene in Noah's Ark," repeated Fulk with all imaginable gravity. "Lord! how fine some of it might be! How sublime, if we could only bring ourselves to fancy that we were alone in the universe, and tossing about upon the wild waste of waters, beneath which lay a world destroyed!"

"Ay, that *if*," said Claridge, half-jestingly at the simplicity of Fulk, and half-ruminating with himself—"that *if*—what mighty things

might be, if that little word did not stand between us and them! *If* I could pluck out conscience, I would walk through unheard-of villainies to all I wished. Why not? Destroy the moral sense, root up the strong convictions that lie deep within us of right and wrong, and wherein is man better than the eagle or the tiger, which preys at will upon inferior creatures? If! Make me but the master of that pigmy word, and I become a giant, with power to arrest the sun in his daily course, or roll it back through boundless space to regions which its beams have never gladdened."

"Yes," said Mc Swinn; "and if *if* had not stood in Noah's way, it is ten to one if he would have put up with the inconvenience of having to take care of his menagerie till the deluge was over."

The Rev. Martin Fulk did not exactly comprehend either this sally of Mc Swinn; or the more caustic irony of Claridge. He still thought a scene in the Ark would be a capital subject for their next meeting, and promised to draw out a sketch of the characters, as well as the heads of the topics which might be introduced.

CHAPTER XVI.

FROM the moment that Sydney Oxford, in obedience to the commands of the Duke of Strathsay, disgusted the whole country, and alienated his political friends, by the matchless effrontery of proposing and carrying a measure which it had been the ceaseless boast of his public life to oppose, as fraught with incalculable peril to the state, there arose a schism which too fatally verified the danger he had once foreseen in common with the wisest and best men of the day.

The throne had no longer a bulwark to defend it. The Parliament had forfeited its dignity and authority in the general opinion of the nation. Contempt was loudly and universally expressed for ministerial and all other honour; for all honour had been sullied, more or less,

by those who, while they betrayed the Constitution, betrayed equally a shameless venality, a prostitution of principle, and a despicable subserviency of conduct, such as were without parallel in the most corrupt instruments of power that had ever sold themselves to infamy.

Even they who profited by the wholesale apostacy despised their benefactors. They accepted the gift, and turned their backs in scorn upon the givers. They received the boon they had long demanded, and demanded in vain; but, with honest indignation, they spat upon the creatures who came crawling with it to their feet.

"We have sought this," they cried, "through a thousand channels; it has come to us, at last, through the dirtiest. We have claimed it as men seeking what we deemed our rights: we have obtained it from those who denied they *were* our rights—who deny them now, in their hearts, but who are ready to buy the stations they occupy, at a price which brands them with indelible dishonour. We owe them nothing: we thank them for nothing. The time was come when, in *their* judgment,

we could no longer be safely refused ; and what they have granted is the fruit of a sordid compact made with themselves, by which they keep for themselves a base profit, upon condition of executing a still baser purpose."

The Duke of Strathsay, indeed, or rather the servile herd of adulators who took their note of praise from his Grace's own notions upon the subject, dwelt triumphantly upon the final success of the measure, as a proof that he was the greatest minister the country had seen for the last half century ; because he had accomplished, in a few short months, what his predecessors, or some of them, at least, would fain have accomplished before, if they could.

And could they not? No.—Why? Ask an honest man why he cannot amass the gains of the swindler, the gambler, or the highwayman. He will tell you—Because I cannot employ the *same means.* If this simile offend, take another. Ask the enlightened statesman why he cannot pursue plans which a rash, dogmatical, and foolish one, grasps at without fear? He will answer you—Because I am neither rash, dogmatical, nor foolish; because I carry my calculations

beyond the present moment; because I can penetrate the remote consequences of the thing proposed, and dare not brave them.

Idiots, who could *not* perceive, in the means employed, the only secret of their success; or gross, venal flatterers, who, perceiving, lacked honesty enough to proclaim the truth; shallow, shortsighted politicians, who were unable to comprehend the difference between merely doing a thing, and the expediency or justice of doing it:—these alone were the noisy applauders of the Duke of Strathsay's vigorous tactics as a minister. Such sages would gape with astonishment, were they told *any* man can fling himself off the Monument, but reminded, that only one class of persons would actually take the leap.

Bad men hate those who tell them what they are, with a rancour equal to their anxiety for the fawning sophistries which seek to fling a blinding light round their actions. Hence, the fierce persecution, by the Strathsay cabinet, of all who dared to denounce the flagitious scene which had been acted. The instrument of this persecution was found in a man who had

passed a long life, even to the verge of grey hair, in espousing principles which he now obsequiously crucified. Sir JUDAS ISCARIOT was a Whig — a stern, uncompromising, high-flying Whig. Liberty, in all its forms, was his tongue's idol: liberty of speech, liberty of conscience, liberty of action, liberty of writing, the liberty, *par excellence*, of doing what we please, while the *we* who invoke, are the only *we* who exercise, the privilege—was his *sancta divinitas*.

But Sir Judas Iscariot was a lawyer as well as a Whig; and the pernicious compound generated its own "perfection of a man." If whiggery taught him to profess doctrines which seated him in the hearts of the vulgar, the law, as *he* had studied it at least, instructed him how to violate them at the suggestions of his own heart. A fifth-rate politician engrafted upon a third-rate lawyer, versed only in the technical practice of courts, and learned only in the subtleties of a science which clothes a mean mind with inveterate habits of low cunning, are the elements out of which such characters as Sir Judas Iscariot are produced. Add to these one quality — the gift of nature —

invincible effrontery, and the character is complete. Nature had bestowed this quality with a free-giving hand upon Sir Judas.

He was selected to crush, by the *arbitrary* forms of legal power, those who were intrepid enough to warn their country of the perils which environed her from the actual and meditated policy of the Duke of Strathsay and his apostate colleagues. He went to work like a man to whom oppression, injustice, and cruelty, were the longings of his soul. He scattered dismay and ruin around him. Submission could not pacify, while resistance maddened him. Reckless, alike, of former professions and present consistency, — of friends who blushed for him, and of foes who execrated him,—of public decorum, identified with the office he held, and of personal honour, involved in the motives he avowed, he carried destruction into private families, struck down the honest defenders of principles adverse to his own, turned purveyor to the King's prisons, and outraged the national feeling by his vindictive and multiplied aggressions upon the Liberty he once worshipped, and in whose insulted name he

presumed to aim the blows beneath which she staggered.

His proceedings were arraigned in Parliament. Not a voice was raised to justify them save his own. He stood before the country degraded and despised. But votes were ready, to shield him from the consequences of his deeds. He knew this. His accusers knew this too. *They*, therefore, were content with dragging him to an account; and Sir Judas Iscariot was content to be protected, where he could not be vindicated.

These things sunk deep in the public mind, preceded and followed as they had been by others which sunk still deeper. The Duke of Strathsay became unpopular. His ministry grew into contempt. The people had no confidence in them, and they had no confidence in each other. The cry for a change was loud and general. Any set of men, it was felt, would be better than the feeble, yet presumptuous, dishonest, yet haughty rulers with which the nation was afflicted. The Duke of Strathsay fancied he could stem this torrent of popular odium, as in war he would have driven back

an enemy's division. But he only plunged from one absurdity to another, exposing the real imbecility of his character as a minister, and betraying despotic notions which inflamed what was at first merely derision and scorn, into hatred and resentment. At the same time, the country saw itself in a condition which demanded from the Government a rare union of sagacity, firmness, temper, and moderation, while it was actually governed by men who were not only utterly destitute of these qualities, but to whom it refused the credit of being influenced by honest intentions.

Such a combination of circumstances could lead only to one result. A ministry resolved to keep their places, and a people resolved to expel them, must end, sooner or later, in the predominance of the popular voice. The Duke of Strathsay waited till he saw the uplifted arm which was ready to thrust him from his seat, and then, obligingly resigned! The act was hailed with acclamations from one end of the empire to the other.

His successor was EARL BROWN, a man with large family to provide for, and distinguished

by his exemplary endeavours to get them all into good situations. His domestic virtues were of a different kind from those of Lord Frederick Uxor; for, whereas Lord Frederick thought only of his wife, Earl Brown thought of every branch of his family, even down to his wife's cousins.

He was the proudest man alive; proud of himself, proud of his children, proud of his daughters' husbands, proud of his sons' wives, proud of his own abilities, proud of his own opinions, proud of the station he now occupied, and, above all, immeasurably proud of the "Order to which he belonged." This last pride, like all the others, had no higher origin than self; for he was the first of his race that had attained to the privilege of signing his surname only to a letter. It was not the pride of ancestry, therefore, which emblazoned in his eyes the dignity of the "Order to which he belonged;" it was the pride reflected from the consciousness of the Order itself having gained an accession of nobility in his person!

But all pride is an emanation of weakness. The greatest man is the humblest in his own

esteem; not the affectation of humility, which is easily seen through, but the sincere conviction of a superior mind, one of whose first discoveries ever is, the infinite littleness of what is accounted perfection in human nature. It is the absence of this power to discern the true quality of what passes current in the world, that makes the bulk of mankind the dupes of self-imposture, paying each other with counters instead of gold, and amassing for themselves a store of counterfeit coin, which is their bubble wealth, instead of being contented with the noble poverty which is our richest portion here below.

Earl Brown had vegetated beneath the bleak skies of Whigland for nearly half a century, and, until he became a minister, had a right to boast of his consistency. Till that eventful moment, he had never changed his place, (except during a short summer trip to the more genial regions of the Treasury,) nor, as he maintained, ever wished to change it. But, "I would not if I could," is every man's motto while he knows, "he could not if he would." No sooner, however, did he find himself in the situation of those whom he had been all his life instructing

in their duty, than he acknowledged with the ancient sage, that one of the easiest things is that of giving advice.

Thirty years before, for example, he had solemnly pledged himself to the support of a measure which he pronounced essential to the public welfare; for thirty years he had never swerved from the principles involved in that measure. And what was the first thing he had to do, when armed with the power to carry the measure? Simply to confess that it was impracticable, and to substitute for it a modified plan, such as he would have denounced as worthless had it been brought forward by any minister but himself. This is the difference between brawling about a thing, and doing the thing about which we brawl; the difference between giving advice to others, and following, ourselves, our own advice.

Associated with Earl Brown was the identical Henry Bruffham, whose character was so felicitously drawn by Claridge in one of the sittings of the *Muses*.* The "Cerberus of St. Stephen's Chapel" was *at last* "gorged with the

* Vol. ii. page 176.

morsel" for which he had so long hungered. His price was paid down; paid down and accepted, at the very moment when, in deference to that consistency which he considered "an absolute necessity of his nature," he was loudly declaring, in the face of the whole world, there was *no* price that could tempt him to forego an honour which he regarded as the highest possible to be conferred upon such public virtue as had earned it for himself. Alas! what weak, erring creatures the best of us are! Temptation comes, and we fall. Twenty thousand a-year knocks down the most upright man! It levelled at a blow, the sturdy, athletic, lofty virtue of Henry Bruffham!

Ten thousand he would have defied—fifteen thousand he would have fought with—but twenty thousand vanquished him without a struggle. Unjustly calumniated Walpole! What man has *not* his price? The thing is the same; we only call it by different names, according to our several fancies. Thus, Henry Bruffham was at infinite pains to convince a slanderous world, that the exalted wish to serve his country, alone influenced him in encumbering himself with the state and trappings of an office, whose

"gewgaw splendour" he profoundly despised. And what did the world do? Why, it laughed in his face, as it always does, when mountebank patriotism appears upon the stage to gull fools with spurious wares.

Lord Frederick Uxor and Lord Palmerstree were two other colleagues of Earl Brown. The former, having been a prime minister himself, gave a signal proof of *his* exalted wish to serve his country, by descending to a third-rate office now. But it was office; and that was enough. He had walked up the political ladder, step by step, to its topmost round; and rather than not be on the ladder at all, he was ready to crawl down it again, till he arrived once more at the bottom.

He made it a condition, however, that the duties of his office should not be allowed to interfere with his duties to his wife. All the time he could spare from candles and confections, from the airing of bedgowns and nightcaps, from the superintending of draughts that required to be well shaken before taking,—all the time, in short, that could be snatched from the "tender office" of head-nurse at home, he promised faithfully to give to the office of

which he was the head, under Earl Brown's administration.

Lord Palmerstree, who had been the friend of Cranstoun, and united with him in the toils of government, became the enemy of the Duke of Strathsay, when his Grace permitted him to relax from those toils in the leisure of retirement. How he arrived at the discovery that his past life, his whole political training, and the sentiments he had always professed, were compatible with serving under Earl Brown, is more than we can explain.

Whether Earl Brown's necessities made him glad of Lord Palmerstree's services, or whether Lord Palmerstree's own necessities made him ready for any services that had a useful salary tacked to their performance, we shall not take upon ourselves to decide. Perhaps, the difficulty may be solved by adopting unequal quantities of the two hypotheses as the menstruum, in the proportion of about nine-tenths of Lord Palmerstree's wants to one-tenth of Earl Brown's. We are inclined to think this a correct estimate; because, unquestionably, Earl Brown could not have been

reduced to any distressing dilemma, when such a man as Lord Palmerstree was sufficient to help him out of it.

There was his own son-in-law, for instance, Lord Druham, every way competent to do whatever Lord Palmerstree could do. He could talk as well, think as profoundly, and act as wisely. He did not, to be sure, possess the same habits of business, because he had never been in office before; but the chief clerks of the department might have performed the work, while his Lordship was learning it.

This was no such uncommon thing; especially in the administration of Earl Brown, who considered all his family, all his relations, and all his friends, fit for whatever duties he could fit *them* with. In compliance with this conviction, he had begun with sweeping every office as clear as a good housemaid does a breakfast-parlour. Not a man was suffered to remain; and had every man represented a dozen offices, there were Whigs enough upon the look-out to have filled all the vacancies. It is not to be supposed, therefore, that Lord Palmerstree was any Godsend for Earl Brown.

The motley Government thus got together, (composed of chiefs who knew little, and of subordinates who knew less, of the complex movements of the machine they had to direct,) set to work, as novices generally do, with a confidence infinitely disproportioned to their discretion. At first, they hardly knew what to make of themselves in their new dignities; while, by degrees, they were as much perplexed to make their dignities answer to their uses.

But their greatest difficulty lay here. They had condemned every thing which their predecessors had done, and recommended every thing they had left undone. What was the consequence? With their eyes opened by being in *their* places, and seeing what could be completely seen only *in* those places, they had to choose between confessing they had clamoured for place, and place alone, by showing that they were no wiser than those they had decried, or risk imminent dangers by acting up to their creed, and thus showing, that faction has its fools as well as its knaves.

CHAPTER XVII.

"I ENTREAT you," said Sir George Ardent, "not to conceal your opinion! I have requested Lady Ardent to leave us alone, that I might obtain from you the truth, fearing lest your regard for her feelings might induce you to shape it delusively. For God's sake, do not let me dream on, if I am at last to be roused from my dream by a calamity which will prove a thousand-fold more terrible, should it burst upon me unprepared. Tell me, at once, is there any thing to fear?"

"Much!" replied Dr. Holdsworth—"much to fear, and, I am afraid, little to hope!"

"Oh God! oh God! oh God!" exclaimed Sir George, clasping his hands, while a sigh burst from him which told how sharp was the anguish that produced it.

"Yet, Sir George," continued Dr. Holds-

worth, " do not forget, that while the sufferer breathes, nature *may* rally, and wonderfully prove how little we are able to comprehend the mysterious sources of her energies."

" And thus, then, all I have to trust to," replied Sir George, with a distressing wildness in his looks, " is a miracle! a something that *may* happen, to support me against the coming on of that before which my soul sinks in utter dismay! Can nothing be done?"

" Nothing should be left undone," answered the physician, " which offers the most remote chance of being beneficial. Therefore, it is, I have advised that Miss Ardent be immediately removed to a more genial climate,—that her mind should be soothed, and at the same time gently excited, by new objects, in which it may take an interest, perhaps,—that her thoughts should be withdrawn, if possible, from the engrossing subject that now almost exclusively occupies them, and that her feelings may receive an impulse which would gradually incline them to make cheerful acquaintance with things for which they have now no sympathy."

" It shall be so —and forthwith," exclaimed

Sir George. "But tell me, Doctor,—do you think it is too late— ?" His voice faltered.

"I know what you would say," interrupted Dr. Holdsworth, "and I have well considered that point; the result is, a firm conviction that the experiment would be imminently dangerous. Miss Ardent can bear no violent emotions of any kind, in her present situation. I would not answer for her life, if she were exposed to a sudden inrush of strong feelings: and to show you exactly what my impressions are, I should unhesitatingly prefer, were I reduced to the necessity of choosing between them, that she should sustain the shock of some great grief, rather than one of equally great joy. The actual tone of her mind might, perhaps, by its predisposing tendency to melancholy images, receive the former without much increase of excitement; but the total revulsion of feelings which would be occasioned by the latter, would be more than her feeble state can sustain. The only safe course, in her present situation, is to keep her tranquil, and, as far as may be, gently to revive the sinking flame that one rude gust would extinguish for ever."

"I thank you for this advice," said Sir George, "whose wisdom my own judgment ratifies, though of itself it could not have been trusted to give it. I will not lose a day, an hour, in following it; and may a merciful God vouchsafe his blessing upon all I mean to do to save my child!"

It had come to this! The meek, noble-minded girl had proudly met the wishes of her father, had obeyed the impulses of her own lofty and quick spirit, till she was hovering on the brink of the grave.

What! it will be asked by some, was it enough to work such consequences, that an intercourse which ministered to her happiness was merely suspended, and suspended, too, under circumstances that yielded the hope of seeing it at an end as suddenly perchance as it was imposed? They know little of human nature who suppose that all things touch all hearts alike. That which drives one man mad, but makes another laugh. That which breaks down one mind, only nerves another with redoubled energy. That which cankers in the soul of one, scarcely wrings a tear from the hard eyes of another. If we would make men

happy, it must be after the fashion of what they, not ourselves, account happiness. If we would judge of their griefs, it must be by what they suffer, not by the quality of the cause which produces their sufferings.

"We are all face," replied the hardy Scythian to the effeminate Asiatic, who wondered how his naked limbs could endure the keen blasts which his own smooth cheek encountered without flinching. Louisa Ardent was all heart. It was the wide surface whence sprung a thousand delicate and tender affections, which enfolded her in their sensitive web, and which vibrated in jarring tones, to as many accidents that would have been unfelt by the million. Hence her misery, and its alarming consequences. Let it not be demanded, where was that strength of mind which raised her so much above her sex? The mind has no power over real sorrow. What passes for that power, lies in the greater or less degree of susceptibility to sorrow. We hail, as the triumph of reason, a victory that is obtained by the arms which apathy supplies. Had Burke no mind? Was his reason of the common order? Yet, he sunk

beneath a blow which common men feel daily, and smile afterwards.

Sir George saw the havoc that had been made, but absolved himself as the spoiler. His wrath, instead of recoiling upon himself, as the first cause of what he deplored, was hurled in silent maledictions upon the head of General Asper. He did not consider that he had reared a plant too fragile to bear the storms of life; he accused the storms that blighted it. He did not reflect, that he had moulded a character unfit for the world; he reviled, he execrated a world which moves by general laws that cannot stop or change their course to spare the individual. He should have shielded her from their influence by snatching her from the circle where they operated; or, to be consistent with himself, he should have set them at defiance, when he found they menaced the creature whom he disdained to adapt to their operation. There were moments, indeed, in which this conviction forced itself upon him; but he escaped from it instantly, as something too terrible to think of, and soothed the pangs it

inflicted by the increased bitterness of his denunciations against the General.

Lady Ardent alone viewed the calamity in its true light. She had always dreaded the too probable results of the high-wrought sensibilities and visionary sentiments which her husband had so enthusiastically cultivated in Louisa; she dissented, too, from the necessity of persisting in a resolution which left her exposed to all the most dangerous mischiefs of those sensibilities and sentiments. But she reverenced his motives too deeply, and loved him too well, to harrow up his feelings now by disclosing her thoughts. Her only anxiety was to avert, if it were still possible, the great calamity of all.

When Louisa was informed by Sir George of Dr. Holdsworth's advice, and learned that she was to be removed to a warmer climate,—"It is a weakness, I know," said she, panting as she spoke, while a vivid crimson flush passed across her wan features—"but I would not like to die from home."

Her father could make no reply.

"And yet," continued the resigned sufferer, "where is home? Even anywhere, so that we are surrounded by those we love!"

"My dear child," exclaimed Sir George, kissing her parched lips, through which her breath came hot and feverish, "you must not yield to these gloomy fears, or they will accomplish their own sad forebodings."

"There is neither gloom nor fear in what I feel," replied Louisa calmly. "There *was* a time when I felt both; not now. I cannot tell how the change has come upon me, but it has come; perhaps, because every step we take when we are surely treading the path that leads to the grave, releases us, one after the other, from those many bonds that hold us to the world, so long as we are for the world. Believe me, my father, I speak it in earnest truth, when I say, it would grieve me more to retrieve the past than to meet the future!"

Sir George changed the conversation. It was distressing to himself, and he knew it partook of the poison which was wasting the life he clung to so passionately.

Sad preparations were made for their jour-

ney, and in a few days every thing was ready for the departure of the interesting invalid. Charles accompanied Sir George and Lady Ardent. The morning before they set off, he received a letter from Colonel Asper, who was only half informed of the dangerous situation of his beloved, and found that half more than he could bear. He announced his intention of immediately repairing to London, resolved to be near her, if it should turn out that his father was still inexorable, and Sir George still determined not to level the barrier he had raised.

"It will be some comfort," said he, at the conclusion, "to know I breathe the same air,—to feel that only a few streets divide us, and to look upon the walls of her dwelling-place. All this I *may* do, my dear friend, and infringe no jot the severe pledge exacted from me, which I have kept so faithfully. All this I *will* do. It is several months since I heard from the General. Personal expostulation may succeed where written prayers have failed. He shall hear from my lips the tale of misery which his caprice has occasioned. He shall *see* the wretch

he has made; and one moment of nature's triumph may achieve the happiness of all."

Louisa was sitting with her brother when the servant delivered this letter to him. A hasty glance at the superscription told her from whom it came. She watched his countenance as he read it, and perceiving, as she thought, a melancholy expression steal over his features, she murmured in a half whisper, "Is he well?"

"Yes, dear Louisa, he is well; but—"

"No more!" she exclaimed. "It is all I wish to know now, and more than I have sought to learn till this moment."

She rose from her seat, and slowly walked to another part of the room where there was a table with pen, ink, and paper. She wrote; and when she had finished, folded it up and sealed it. She returned to her brother, and looking stedfastly at him,—

"Charles," said she, in a tremulous voice, "take this. Keep it. There will soon come a time when you will know what I would have you do with it."

The entrance of Lady Ardent prevented

Charles from making any reply; but if he had not turned away from his mother, she would have known, by the tears which glistened in his eyes, that something had occurred, beyond ordinary discourse, between him and Louisa.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE south of Italy was the intended sojourn of the travellers, and by easy stages they had proceeded as far as Verona, when the situation of Louisa became so alarming, that it was resolved to rest there for a few weeks. Repose, a balmy atmosphere, sunny skies, and the exciting novelty of every thing by which she was surrounded, seemed, for a time, to be operating a beneficial change. She slept better, her appetite improved, her strength partially returned, and even she herself almost believed, though she did not share, the hopes which began to cheer the anxious feelings of her family.

Colonel Asper, meanwhile, hurried to London upon the receipt of Charles' letter, desirous, if possible, of arriving there before Sir George set out for Italy. It was a severe trial to find

he was too late! But its severity was somewhat softened by the successful issue of his appeal to the paternal feelings of his father.

"Am I still to consider myself under the ban of your interdiction with regard to Miss Ardent?" said he, after their first greeting was over.

"I don't know," replied the General. "Where is Miss Ardent?"

"On her way to Italy."

"Humph! She is gone upon a tour, I suppose, and hopes to find me dead when she comes back."

"Not so, Sir. I fear it is too likely she is gone to die herself," replied the Colonel dejectedly.

"To die! Pooh! Girls don't die now-a-days because they can't marry. What's the matter with her?"

"She is ill — very ill. A letter which I received from her brother, and which quickened my departure from Ireland, alarms me more by what it evidently conceals than by what it discloses."

"And do you mean to say that her illness has been caused by—"

"Too certainly, Sir!" interrupted the Colonel—"too certainly—and Heaven grant I may not have to add, too fatally! My sister could have told you, long ago, if you would have permitted her to name the subject—"

"Which she never did," said the General, forgetting, as usual, his own share in the thing he complained of. "But, Harry—this won't do!"

"Won't do!" exclaimed the Colonel, at a loss to reconcile the apparent meaning of his father's words, with the seeming return of kindlier feelings denoted by the familiar appellation of "Harry."

"It won't do, I say—it won't do!—I am not the disposer of life and death, Harry—I must not kill other men's children—I have no right to make them ill, even. Why the devil didn't Caroline insist upon telling me what I was about? It was her duty, and she ought to have known it—to prevent me from making myself miserable. By my soul, this is too bad! Was I a witch, to discover what was going on, without seeing or hearing any thing? Do you think I would be such a Mahometan Turk

as to — Harry! Harry! the poor girl must not die!"

The General extended his hand towards his son, who clasped it fervently as he exclaimed— "Heaven bless you, my dear father, for that kind word!"

"Heaven blesses none who do not bless—" said the General, in a stifled voice. "Do unto us as we do unto others! That is a very serious thing to ask, Harry, from Him who has power to deal with us according to our deeds! But, zounds! I have no patience with that brick-wall, Sir George! *He* knew how matters stood, and could see his child in her shroud, rather than come to me and ask my forgiveness! For he was in the wrong, you know, Harry."

"Why, it is difficult to say—"

"Not at all difficult," interrupted the General. "You don't mean to pretend he was not in the wrong? or that he was not detestably obstinate afterwards? But that is all past now. I forgive him, Harry, with all my heart, and you may tell him so; adding, if you choose, I could not forgive myself were I to keep up my pet any longer, seeing how things have

turned out. And now, Harry, hearken to me. Write by this day's post to Sir George Ardent; bid him come back directly, bring his daughter with him, and she shall go to church with you the next morning."

"I hardly know where a letter would find him," replied the Colonel. "But I could find him myself."

"Then set off—and immediately; for hours well employed now, may snatch years of felicity from the danger that threatens them."

"Will you not write a few lines to Sir George?" inquired the Colonel.

"Eh?—No. It would look like a reflection upon your honour, Harry, as if you were capable of telling a lie."

"And am I to say any thing to my friend, Charles Ardent?"

"Humph! He is not ill, is he? He is not dying for a wife?"

"No—but—"

"Very well," said the General after a pause. "Be it so; for I could not look my own poor girl in the face, if I saw there a silent reproach to me, that I had made another man's child

happier than my own. So! that is settled! And I am not ashamed to confess," he continued, rising from his chair, and turning his eyes with a benign expression upon his son, "that now it is settled, there is a something here, (pointing to his heart,) which tells me I have been my own friend."

The Colonel kissed his hand, and hurried out of the room to impart to Caroline her portion of the glad tidings.

It was late in the evening when this conversation took place; but late as it was, every necessary preparation was made before he retired to rest, for starting early the following morning. The last letter he had received from Charles was dated Lyon, and in that he specified the route by which they intended to enter Italy. With this knowledge of their movements, he doubted not he should be able to trace them; while he anticipated the happiest consequences from the news of which he was the bearer.

CHAPTER XIX.

Sir George, Lady Ardent, and Charles, (but the first especially,) had yielded to the most sanguine expectations of Louisa's recovery, from the transient gleam of renovated health that dwelt upon her countenance, and gave animation to her manner, when they were suddenly plunged into the utmost consternation by a change that seemed to betoken her speedy dissolution.

They were seated at a window which opened upon a delicious landscape. The sun had set; but there lingered a roseate flush in the sky, and upon the lofty tops of the hills that rose majestically in the distance. Louisa had watched the flaming orb descend behind these mountains, like one entranced.

"How beautiful!" she exclaimed. "Look at yon dark and stormy ridge of clouds, whose edges are bright with dazzling gold, while, between them and the further west, the clear sky is of a pale, soft blue colour, deepening in some parts into a mild saffron hue! Then, as the gusty wind sweeps along, masses of transparent clouds are driven to and fro, of a vivid crimson, like chariots of the sky careering over the heavens, with angelic messengers despatched to do the bidding of the Almighty God! And see—the glorious change in this sublime spectacle! The sun, too dazzling to look upon, emerges from the stormy ridge, flings round him a blaze of indescribable splendour, and sinks, in magnificent glory, to carry light and gladness to other worlds! To *other* worlds? Where are they?"

The attention of those present had been directed to the objects she was so fervently apostrophizing; but the faint and hardly articulate manner in which she uttered the last words—"to *other* worlds—where are they?"—excited the notice of her father. He turned hastily round, and perceived that she was

reclining in her chair as if asleep. He spoke to her. She did not answer. He instantly seized her hand, to feel her pulse, while Lady Ardent gently raised her, so that her head might rest upon her bosom.

"She has fainted," said Sir George. "The flutter of her pulse is scarcely perceptible."

Stimulants were applied to her temples and nostrils, and the doors of the apartment thrown open, which produced a refreshing current of air; but it was some time before there appeared any symptoms of returning animation. The interval was one of dreadful forebodings to her alarmed family. At length, she heaved a long, deep, broken sigh, and unclosing her eyes, turned them upon her father with a strange, bewildered expression.

"Where have I been?" said she, in a whisper.

"You have had a slight fainting fit, my dear love!" replied Lady Ardent.

"Occasioned, I have no doubt," added her father, "by the over-excitement of your feelings, in contemplating the gorgeous spectacle which so violently affected you."

" I have seen wonderful things!" she said, in the same low voice.

" What is it you mean, my child?" answered Lady Ardent.

Louisa remained silent for a moment, as if ruminating upon images then present to her mind. After a while she spoke.

" I was in bed, methought, and there came into the room two figures as of women, but with angelic countenances. They were clothed in white, and from their shoulders parted large swan-like wings. They carried a coffin, which they placed beside my bed, and bending over me they raised me, with such a sweet smile upon their radiant features, and laid me in my coffin. This done, they went away. But then I saw you, my dear father, and you, my mother, and you, Charles, standing round me, weeping. It seemed just such a sunny evening as this has been; for though it was twilight in my chamber, a faint effulgence of the setting sun diffused itself around. I thought I wondered why you wept, when I felt so happy; but before I could speak, the whole scene vanished. It was very strange!"

Sir George struggled hard to conceal the emotions he felt. A tear from Lady Ardent fell upon Louisa's brow. She looked up.

"You *are* weeping, my mother!" she exclaimed,—"and I!—I am without grief! So was it all the foreshadowing of a truth."

"No, no, my dear Louisa!" said Charles, forcing a melancholy smile,—"not so—for we are not standing round your coffin—and besides, you see, I shed no tears—and our father looks upon you with eyes that are not wet."

The voice of Charles, as he spoke, betrayed hat, if his tears fell not, there was a strife between them and his words; while Sir George averted his face to conceal those which were trickling fast down his cheeks.

"You are right, my brother," replied Louisa calmly, "I am not in my coffin; but when tomorrow's sun sinks behind yon hills, that now look so grey and dim in the shadows of evening,"—

"Hush—hush—my love!" interrupted Lady Ardent. "I cannot bear to hear you talk thus. I know it is the mere effect of disease,—of the long illness which has worn down your buoyant

spirits, and imparted a mournful character to your feelings; but, indeed, we must not allow you to indulge in those feelings. They will retard your recovery."

"My recovery!" exclaimed Louisa. "I wish I could not only make you believe that I should be sorry to think such a thing possible, but possess you with those sentiments which have long made *me* consider it undesirable. I feel very weak, and should like to go to bed."

Leaning on the arm of her mother, she withdrew to her apartment.

She slept better that night than she had for many preceding months. Her cough did not trouble her. She breathed tranquilly; and while asleep, there was no restless movement of the limbs, no profuse perspiration, nor any rambling of the mind manifested by sudden, incoherent expressions. When she awoke in the morning, her eye was bright, and her whole appearance indicative of that rallying which is the consequence of sound, undisturbed repose.

The day passed without any visible change in these favourable symptoms; but the conversation of the preceding evening had produced in

the mind not only of Lady Ardent, but of Sir George and Charles, a sad presentiment of an approaching bereavement. It seemed to them, as if the very hour of their affliction had been defined. In vain they strove to resist the impression, as emanating from weak and superstitious feelings. Many times did they look at the sun pursuing its unclouded course along the heavens, and silently shudder at the idea of seeing it descend towards the west. This anxiety was heightened by the frequent questions of Louisa during the day, to know what hour it was, and by the meaning expression of her eye, as she saw the first glance of its declining beams penetrate into her room, which, from its situation, was exposed only to its afternoon rays.

It was then that she wrote on a slip of paper, with a pencil, the following words:—

LOUISA ARDENT.

IMPLORA ÆTERNA QUIETE!

and beckoning to Charles, who was alone with her, she gave it to him.

"I should like," said she, "to be buried near the grave of Juliet. Our story has some

resemblance! And on my monument let no more be said than I have here written. Nay, my dear brother, why do you grieve? Surely, surely, I do not deceive myself when I say, that had it been my task to see you die, and I had seen you so rejoiced as I am, I should have rejoiced with you. Do not forget to deliver the letter I gave you before I left England — and you may say — for I shall do so — that my last effort was to breathe his name—and bless him!"

A few hours afterwards, the sun went down —and, even as her gentle spirit had been mysteriously forewarned, her father, her mother, her brother wept round her bed in the faint effulgence of its parting rays! So peacefully did she resign her life to Him who gave it—it did not seem as if it were death, but a sweet sleep that had come over her; and in that sleep her soul had taken its flight!

CHAPTER XX.

THE first ebullitions of parental sorrow were such as nature demands for her own relief, and both Sir George and Lady Ardent gave themselves up to their full tide. The latter had scarcely deceived herself with hope, from the very beginning, and therefore the shock, severe and dreadful as it was, fell upon her with diminished force; but the former, because he could not bring himself to anticipate an event he dreaded beyond what language can express, lived on in the delusion that it was not to happen. Hence, when he was compelled to make his heart acquainted with its loss, the tidings were fearful in proportion as the loss itself had been contemplated with agony, though its coming was disbelieved.

But tenfold deeper was the anguish which

succeeded; for if it be horrible to have a much-prized treasure wrested from us, what must it be to know we have, ourselves, flung it away? And of this complexion were the after-thoughts of Sir George Ardent. When his tears ceased to flow, his self-reproaches rose up in stern array before him; those self-reproaches deriving an undue severity of character from the severity of his affliction. Every pang he felt, brought with it the sharp consciousness that he might have spared himself its infliction. Every sigh he breathed, recalled the proud weakness, the foolish inflexibility with which he had given himself cause to sigh. He could not even, in the now distempered state of his mind, find consolation from submission to the will of Providence, for he imagined he had provoked the exercise of that will: a persuasion which forbade him to bow to it, as otherwise he might have done, perchance, with pious resignation.

It was an infallible consequence of his present situation, that the recoil of his feelings should heighten the distaste he had always felt for the world, and embitter his scorn of man. Had there been no world to propitiate, no perverse will of man to wrestle with, he had not

been driven upon the course where his happiness was wrecked. Nor did it tend to soften his disgust, when he reflected, that with all his theoretical disdain of what others feel and think, practically, he had prostrated himself before the altar of social opinion. To revenge his own weakness, therefore, and at the same time to glut his hatred of a despotism that had reached him in spite of himself, he determined never more to admit to his presence any human being, save his own family and domestics.

The resolution was taken deliberately: it was kept inflexibly; and Sir George Ardent, with feelings that sprung from the most exalted principles of human conduct, with a heart that could and did idolize virtue for its own pure worth alone, became, by the morbid influence of those feelings, by the excessive refinement of those principles, and by the unsatisfied yearnings of that too proud and sensitive heart, if not a misanthrope, at least the votary of loneliness; a dweller with voluntary and self-prescribed solitude, in the midst of a thronged and busy world.

But it was before he had thus withdrawn

himself, that Colonel Asper reached his desolate abode in Verona. The speed he had made to follow the steps of his beloved, had partially defeated itself; for at Lyon he was attacked with a violent fever, brought on by anxiety of mind, and incessant bodily fatigue. Shaken as he was, however, and all unfit to pursue his journey, pursue it he would have done, in defiance of every obstacle, had not delirium, which supervened, given to others a control over his actions. In this distressing state he remained two days; and it was nearly a week afterwards before he could proceed.

He found little difficulty in obtaining such information on the road as enabled him to trace Sir George and his family to Verona, which city he entered in the middle of the night. Fain would he have sallied forth instantly, even at that unseasonable hour, to greet his mistress with the joyful tidings of which he was the bearer, had he consulted the impulses of his own desires alone. But he restrained himself, retired to bed, and watched in the morning, that seemed to dawn upon him with more than Italian beauty, as if the very elements reflected

the smiling hopes that played around his own thoughts.

With a bounding step — with a heart that could hardly contain its joy — with looks that proclaimed how a lover's raptures can fling energy over a disease-stricken body, and impart the flush of health to the pale features of sickness, he hurried along the principal street of Verona.

What gorgeous solemnity is that? What magnificent funeral train comes slowly on, in sad mockery of human splendour, feeding the eyes of idle gazers who throng the way, or crowd the windows on either side? He stands apart to let it pass. One wandering, one impatient look is turned upon the mourners. His sight thickens—a cold tremor runs through his veins—his strength is gone—he falls senseless to the earth! Good God! It is the corpse of his well-beloved borne to the tomb!

Is there, in language, power to describe THIS misery? Father—mother—kindred—a fond and doating husband even, widowed in the first joys of his bridal month,—may shed tears at which angels themselves might weep in pity; but their whole sum of grief could not

reach the single sorrow of him who sees the being he adores carried to her grave, in the very moment (ay, as if the only moment that could strike him dead were selected by some fiend to do it,) when his heart is bursting almost, when every pulse is inflamed with hopes, new-born, of leading her to the altar! Teach a man to imagine bliss on earth that comes near the fancied joys of heaven,—let its anticipated fruition so fill his soul, that it or nothing constitutes his desire to live,—make it the deep, unchangeable, all-absorbing and passionate dream of his existence,—place it before him,—let him believe he has only to stretch forth his hand and seize the matchless treasure;—then dash it for ever from his eyes, and some notion may be formed of the withering feelings which now blighted a spirit whose sufferings, after all, remain untold!

We will not dwell upon those sufferings. We wish it had not been our task to record them; but we could not substitute fiction for truth. There are many now living, who, if they read these pages, will recognize the fidelity with which we have traced a narrative whose principal events they well remember; there are

two, in whom the benumbing hand of Time has not been able to deaden the acute misery they caused, as often as Memory, in the too faithful discharge of her office, brings them freshly before their minds; and there is ONE, who, having sought death wherever he was most busy, but could never meet him, now moralizes upon the fabulous notion, that hearts can break under the weight of any worldly grief.

Colonel Asper recovered slowly from the relapse of fever and delirium occasioned by the disastrous blow beneath which he reeled and fell. And when he recovered, what was his state? He seemed to stand alone in the world. In no human heart was he the first and dearest object. Alas! when that is the case, we soon lose all interest in our own fate. Valueless to others, we become so to ourselves. Most heavily, and most wearily, our days follow each other, forgotten, when they are passed, and connecting themselves by no link with those which succeed.

The situation of the Colonel,—the deep anguish of his first feelings,—the settled melancholy, the fixed despondency which afterwards appeared, were keen aggravations of the upbraid-

ings that tormented Sir George Ardent. The grave had closed over one victim whose wrongs were his accusers, in the gloomy silence of his thoughts; here was another, a living wretch, in whose miserable looks he still saw the work of his inordinate self-love,—in whose sighs he heard the voice of ceaseless reproach, —in whose shattered frame he beheld the ruin he had wrought. The struggle was fierce and incessant which his presence caused: but he honoured him for the nobleness of his conduct, he pitied him for the severity of his sufferings, and he could not be selfish enough to deny him such consolation as he seemed to derive from his society.

As soon as Colonel Asper's health was sufficiently reinstated, it was determined to quit Verona. Before their departure, he entreated Charles to accompany him to the tomb of Louisa. Unable to dissuade him from a design which must open every wound of his lacerated heart afresh, he consented.

"You have told me the manner of her death," said he, "and I feel that it would be soothing to my feelings to stand beside her

grave, at that evening hour, in those dim shadows of twilight, which she so loved when living."

"It shall be so," replied Charles, pressing his hand affectionately, "and this evening."

"This evening!" repeated the Colonel, without any the slightest perturbation of voice or manner.

At sunset the two friends set forth upon their sad pilgrimage. As they passed along the principal street, where the Colonel had met the funeral bier of his beloved, he grasped, with a firmer hold, the arm of his companion, to sustain his unsteady steps. They entered the church. They were alone within its vast walls. Through the upper compartments of a lofty and richly emblazoned window, the sun's parting rays were streaming in bright and varied hues, borrowed from the brilliant colours of the stained glass. Charles led him onwards till they stood opposite the tomb.

"There!" said he, in a stifled whisper, while his own tears flowed freely.

Colonel Asper fixed his eyes upon the white marble tablet, which bore the inscription pre-

pared by the hand which was mouldering beneath.

LOUISA ARDENT.

IMPLORA ÆTERNA QUIETE.

He approached nearer—leaned against the monumental stone—covered his eyes with his hand—shedding no tear, breathing no sigh—but oh! unveiling to his secret thoughts such pictures of mingled gladness and misery! He saw his beloved, as he had once seen her, with sparkling looks and gladsome smiles—and then—the memory of hopes that had hung delighted on those looks and smiles passed over him! He saw her, as his distracted fears had often pictured her, when learning from Caroline, and the brother of his beloved, what havock grief was making—and then—came again the agony of those days when he only feared he *might* lose her! He saw her, even as though the grave had opened before him—in her shroud—coffined—dead—pale, cold, and wasted,—and then came the mightiest agony of all, in the consciousness that he HAD lost her—that she was decaying into kindred dust at his feet, and that never, never more, in this world, could he look upon her—never, never call her his!

This thought overcame him. He wept bitterly. His tears fell upon the marble tablet as with a fond, lingering kiss, he pressed his lips upon the adored name it bore, and turning to his friend, whose sorrow was hardly less than his own — "Now," said he, "let us go; I am satisfied!"

Charles hesitated.

"Nay," continued the Colonel, "we will tarry here till midnight, if you will; for I can find fit thoughts to keep me company."

"My brother!" exclaimed Charles—"and if the sainted spirit of her who lies here can have communion with the earth, it would delight her to hear me call you by that name—this seems the moment when I can best discharge me of a trust confided to me by my dear sister, before we left England."

"What do you mean?" said the Colonel. "Whatsoever it is, let me know; for, whatever it may be, it can never find me in a fitter mood than now, to listen."

Charles drew from his pocket the letter of Louisa, and gave it to him. He broke the seal impatiently, and read—

"I AM writing what will never meet *your* eyes, dear Henry, till *mine* are closed in death — what will never cause a pang to *your* heart, till *mine* has ceased to beat! You will read it, therefore, as a voice from the tomb.

"Be comforted, love! Think, that every sun which rises after I am gone, is the farewell to a day that must be counted ere we can meet again, and the herald of another that is passing away!

"I will not bid you forget me, Henry. Love like mine would be dishonoured if you could, for *I* am going to the grave, because I *cannot* forget *you*.

"What a sweet consolation I feel at this instant, in the idea, that perhaps it may be permitted that I shall hover round you — look upon you — bless you with a holier love than now, — an angel's love — while your poor weeping eyes peruse these farewell words! No more: *but* farewell, till you are as I shall be *when* you peruse them.

"THINE! Henry—THINE!

LOUISA."

Whatever were the emotions which this letter produced, they betrayed themselves neither

in words nor gestures; and, except that there was a slight trembling of his hands as he folded it up, and thrust it into his bosom, it would have been impossible to infer, from his manner, that he was agitated. But, as he folded it up, he slowly raised his eyes, with an intensity of awful expression in them, which denoted either that he was holding a solemn communion of the soul with his departed mistress, or else, that he half expected to behold her in mysterious vision, actually receiving the consolation she imagined might be permitted to her.

Charles did not disturb his grief. His own feelings, indeed, were not of a character to make him talkative. They quitted the church in silence; and when they returned home, the Colonel retired to his room, where he remained till the following morning. The increased dejection of his looks, and the dull yet inflamed state of his eyes, proclaimed that he had passed the night in brooding over thoughts which had revived too much of the despairing poignancy of his first sorrows. In the afternoon of that day, they left Verona, making the first stage of their journey towards England.

A few sentences will suffice to tell the remainder of our story.

When they arrived in England, Sir George, accompanied by Lady Ardent, Charles, and Frederick, set off immediately for Deddington Park. There he determined to fix his abode for the remainder of his life, resolving never again to visit London, or mix in general society. Lady Ardent, who had no wish, herself, to reappear in the world, devoted her whole time, her every thought, to the comfort of her husband. In her affectionate society, Sir George gradually became less melancholy; but he never recovered from the blow.

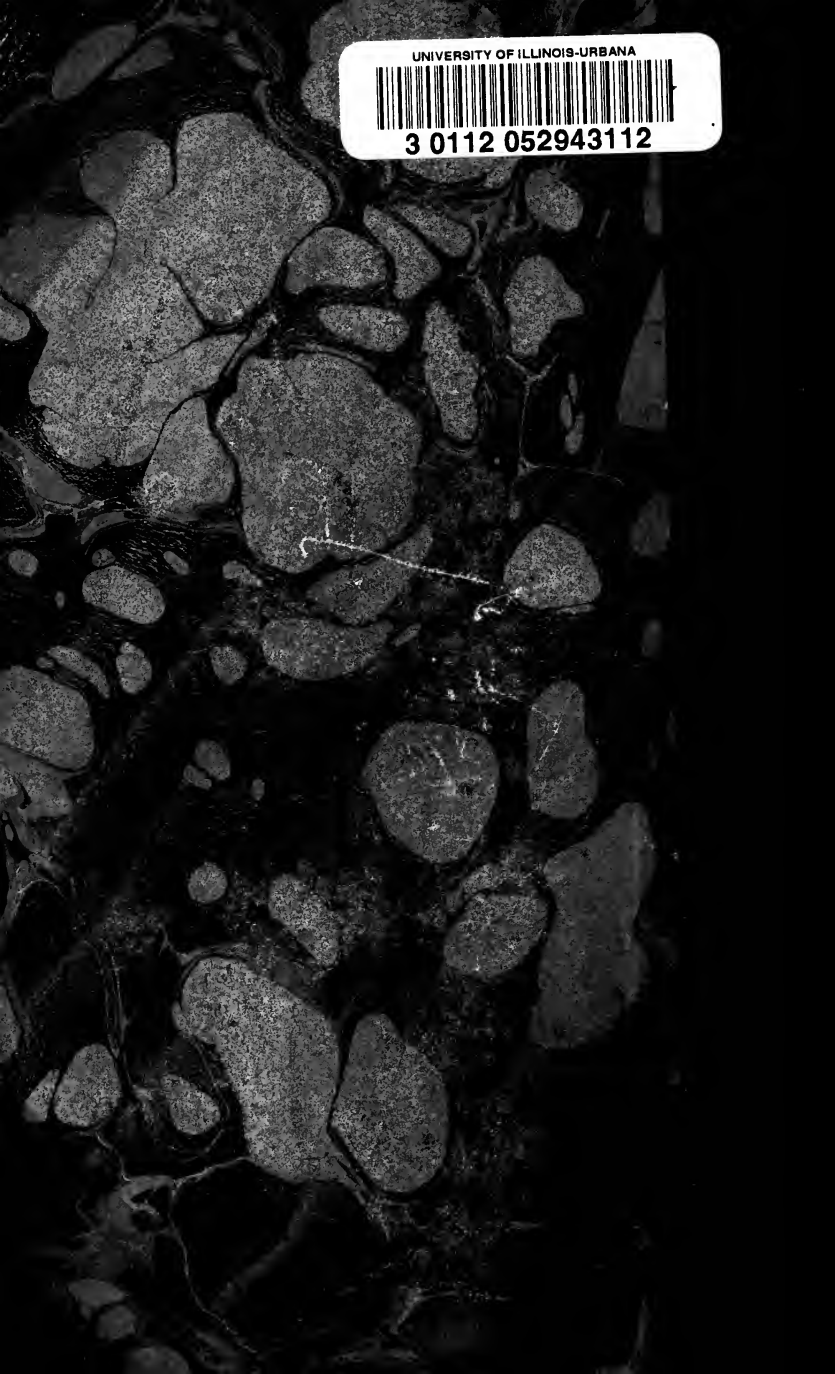
Nor did Colonel Asper, though he did not wholly sink under it. After a short interval, he rejoined his regiment, exchanged into another which was ordered upon foreign service, and courted danger with the daring which recklessness of life, added to his naturally brave and heroic character, inspired. He was frequently wounded, as was inevitable from the manner in which he exposed himself; but while he saw thousands fall around him, every one of whom would fain have lived, he, who would have hugged death with joy,

was denied the boon. Whence this seeming chance? Go seek the reason in that which will teach you it is no chance — but fate — the decree, from the beginning, that no man dies in time or in manner, other than is preordained. Were it not so, that which now looks like the lottery of life, would become an unassailable part of the armour of infidelity.

The General did not long survive the Colonel's return. Before he departed, he had the satisfaction (for it had now become a satisfaction, a healing balm to the secret anguish he could not command from him, when he heard of Louisa's death, and saw what a blighted existence remained for his son,) of seeing Charles and Caroline united. They, at least, were happy. Happier they might have been; but every year which added to their connubial felicity, blunted the edge of those feelings that dashed it with sorrow in the beginning.

THE END.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENTLEY,
Dorset-street, Fleet-street.


UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA
3 0112 052943112